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PC ZONE

Dennis

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PPA

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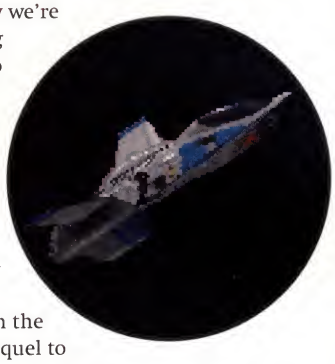
IT'S SMOOTH, it's fast and it's out now. John Davison tries to work out why we're getting another *Wing Commander* game two months before *Wing Commander 3* is launched.



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25 PowerDrive

JEREMY WELLS races up the M1 to check out the new rally driving game from US Gold that has more skids than a pair of Damon Hill's underpants.

30 Quarantine

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32 SuperKarts

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78 Alien Legacy

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PC ZONE
100% GAMES
October 1994 **Issue Nineteen**

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THEY'VE BEEN talking about it for years and now it looks like VR has finally become a reality. Phil South looks at the hardware that will be available in the coming months and asks what's next?

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FED UP spending long nights all alone with nobody to play with? You need to get yourself connected. Simon Bradley and Steve Pritchard guide you through the intricacies of human interaction and multi-player mayhem.

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64 Zool 2 Competition

WIN YOURSELF your very own Video Presenter courtesy of the ninja from the nth dimension.

94 Dreamweb Competition

TO MARK THE release of *Dreamweb* later this month Empire Software is kindly giving you the opportunity to win a murder mystery weekend for two, just to get you in the mood.

100 DOOM Competition Results

WAS YOUR LEVEL good enough to be included in our Top 500? Check out the best of the rest in our competition winners round-up.

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NOBODY SAID it was gonna be easy, but it is when Mark Burgess is on hand to help.

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FIND OUT what's going on at the next Computer Shopper Show to be held at Olympia in December. Including details of the unmissable *PC Zone* games arena.

130 Mr Cursor

HE'S AFRAID of plastic surgery – very afraid.

COVER DISK

HD Disk Version

Quarantine

IT'S BEEN described as *Doom* on wheels with even more blood and gore. Gametek's new 3D scrolling shoot 'em up makes all other games of this genre look pathetically tame by comparison. All you need to do is type ZONE at the 'A' prompt to find out more.

CD-ROM Version

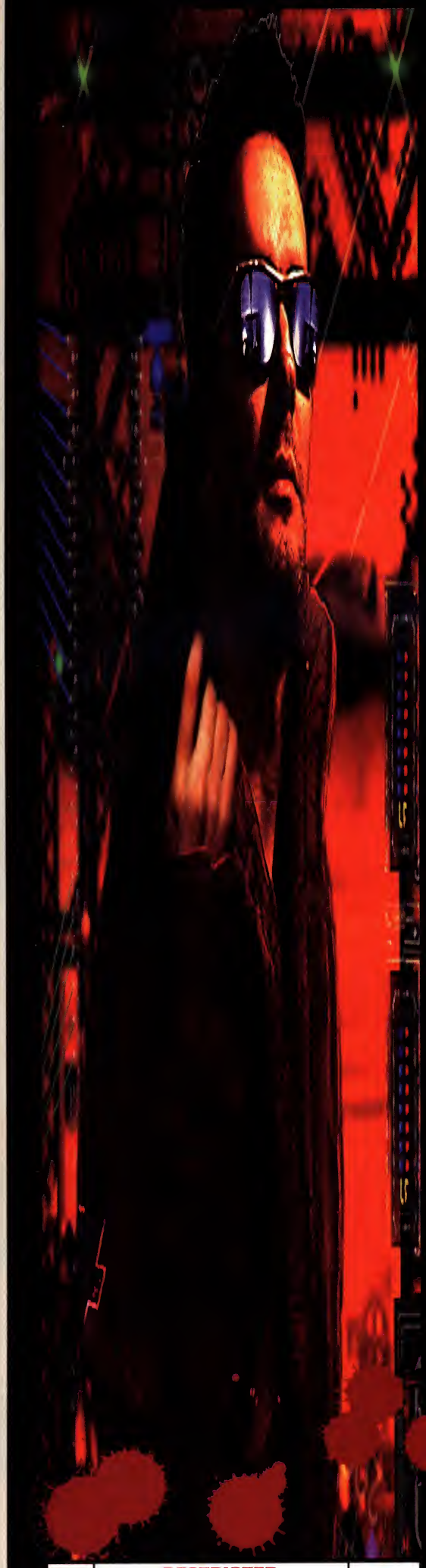
YOU'VE PROBABLY already noticed that there are two of those funny, shiny things stuck to this month's mag and we're not talking milk bottletops.

DISK ONE:

INCLUDES PLAYABLE demos of US Gold's stunning new interactive movie *Under A Killing Moon*, as well as the fast and furious *SuperKarts* from Manic Media Productions due out in October. There are also nearly 500, yes 500 *Doom* levels to work your way through, the playable demo of Gametek's *Quarantine* as found on the HD version of the mag, the Hackmaster utility UNP and three kickin' house tunes to get your feet a pumpin'.

DISK ONE:

Contains examples from Creative Labs' new AWE 32-bit sound card to play through your PC – but don't worry if you haven't got the necessary hardware, they're all there in audio format too so you can at least see (or should that be hear) what you're missing! Altogether not bad when you consider most other mags give you just one measly HD for the same price!



DreamWeb

~~Sunday April~~
Monday April 9
The clock keeps going round.
It won't ~~text~~ tell me the time.
Santa Claus gave a gun to me.
Let loose the puppies of War.
I died last night.

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"....BREATH TAKING...!"
"....HEART STOPPING...!"

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Telephone: 081-343 9143 Fax: 081-343 7447 Modem: 081-343 7557

Bulletin

DISPATCHES

+++ Pioneer Go Quad-Speed
Pioneer have just released their new internal quad-speed CD-ROM drive, billing it as the fastest internal drive available on the market. Boasting a sustained data transfer rate of 614Kb/sec and an average access time of 190ms, the DR-U104X operates at a low enough temperature to work perfectly when mounted inside a PC casing, saving on space and making it easier to set up and configure. The DR-U104X is available from all usual Pioneer dealers and is priced at £599 + VAT. Contact Pioneer on 0753 789789.

+++ PC on the up and up
Sales of PC games were up again last month despite an overall drop in the games market. Recently released figures indicate that the PC game market is growing stronger every month, while the PC CD-ROM market has managed to swipe the lead form the Amiga CD32 thanks to lead titles such as Bullfrog/EA's *Theme Park* and Sierra's *Outpost*.

+++ Return To Zork goes MPEG
If you're looking to upgrade your machine and are in the market for an MPEG card, now could be the time to buy. Sigma Designs are putting out their ReelMagic Controller and CD-ROM Upgrade Kit (£339 and £549 + VAT respectively) with a free copy of Activision's best-selling CD-ROM adventure, *Return To Zork*. The new MPEG version incorporates full-screen, full-motion video, transforming the game into an interactive movie. Contact Sigma Designs on 0462 456780.

+++ Klik & Play Delay
The innovative new games creation package for Windows, *Klik & Play*, previewed in last month's issue, is now due for release on both floppy and CD-ROM in a combined US/UK launch in October. The move follows pressure from US computer stores who are keen to push the CD format over the floppy in an effort to generate more sales during the run up to Christmas. Contact Europress on 0625 878888.

+++ ELSPA 1 Manchester 0
Investigators with the Crime Unit of ELSPA, together with officers from the Greater Manchester Police Obscene Publications Department raided two Manchester addresses last month and seized over 200 CD-ROM discs and CD-ROM writing kit with an estimated street value of £500,000.

Dark Forces

Doom-style game alert! *Doom*-style game alert! You have two months to clear your social life! Two months before *Dark Forces* arrives. Watch out – this Christmas should see the release of what sounds like the game we've all been waiting for: Star Wars Doom. LucasArts have developed their own *Doom*-style engine to meld all the thrills and spills of our favourite sci-fi epics with first-person, in-your-face, 3D, *Doom*-like action.

The plot plonks you in the space boots of a Rebel secret agent sent to infiltrate an Imperial Star Destroyer to recover the plans for the Empire's new weapon – the Death Star (how many times do they build this thing?). As you scurry through corridors, dash across catwalks, and rescue croissant-haired princesses from detention blocks engaging entire squadrons of stormtroopers in blaster battles, you learn of an even more secret Imperial research base. Located on a distant, mountainous planet, the Empire's base is developing a new breed of cybernetic warriors – the Dark Stormtroopers.

The game is set to feature a character capable of looking up and down, as well as ducking and jumping manoeuvres. A vast array of laser weaponry is on hand, plus a motion detector and automap. *Dark Forces* will have over a dozen levels, support multi-player network play (à la *Doom*), and will be flying down your exhaust port around Christmas time.

Mentions of *Doom* in this story: seven

A new breed of stormtroopers hit the Doom-like levels of Dark Forces.

PC ZONE and THE TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD COMPUTER EXCHANGE proudly announce:

THE NATIONAL UK *DOOM* TOURNAMENT

Yep, if you think you're Deathmatch enough to be able to take on the best players in the UK, and you're available in London in early November, then maybe, just maybe, you'd like to compete for the title of: **UK DOOMMASTER™**

❒ I WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO ENTER THE NATIONAL DOOM TOURNAMENT

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DAYTIME TEL: EVENING TEL:

I HAVE PLAYED DEATHMATCH BEFORE ❒ YES ❒ NO

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PC ZONE,
19 BOLSOVER STREET,
LONDON, W1P 7HJ
Or ring the **DOOMMASTER™** hotline on 071-917-7693 on Wednesday

INFORMATION
1. The preliminary rounds and finals will take place in November in the sunny environs of the Tottenham Court Road Computer Exchange in Rathbone Place, London.
2. Applying for entry does not necessarily guarantee involvement. Contestants will be selected on availability.
3. Contestants will be given 28 days notice by telephone or in writing.
4. All games will be played with the enhanced version of Deathmatch (available with *Doom 1.4* and *1.5*), which has negative frags for suicides.
5. Make sure you practise – this is going to be tough.
6. There can be...
7. Only one... DoomMaster™

Bulletin

The $64,000 Question

If you're thinking of upgrading your PC and buying a CD-ROM drive, but don't know your SCSI from your DTR, fear not, help is at hand from US CD-ROM drive manufacturers, Plextor who have produced a handy little booklet entitled *15 Questions To Ask Before Purchasing A CD-ROM Drive.*

It may smell like a piece of pro-Plextor propaganda, but is in fact quite informative, explaining all the jargon used in describing the tech specs of a drive, what all the bits and pieces do and why they need to do it. It does, of course, recommend that you carefully consider looking at a Plextor drive before you buy, but as they make some of the best on the market this isn't such a bad thing.

For those who would like to upgrade their existing drive or simply want their system to be completely future-proof, Plextor have just released a new internal SCSI quad speed CD-ROM drive to accompany their Double Speed Plus range. Both are available as internal or external and are backed by a one-year parts and labour warranty. For price and availability, contact Plextor on 32 2 725 55 22.

Sierra goes stomping mad

Sierra's all new stomp 'n' smash 'em up *Metaltech: Battledrome* is due out in November and very good it looks too. The game features ten different HERC chassis to customise, a massive weapons arsenal allowing you to fully customise your walking warrior, and a number of different environments in which to do battle. The game comes modem-ready for multi-player games and includes camera remotes for a complete arena view as well as a head-up cockpit display. Unlike other games of this genre, *Metaltech: Battledrome* relies as much on tactics as it does pure fire power. Players must bet on the outcome of their confrontations and use their winnings to upgrade their HERC and win the accolade of HERC champion. *Metaltech: Battledrome* will only be available on CD-ROM priced £44.99.

Also due for release soon from Sierra are *Aces Of The Deep*, a highly realistic WWII German U-Boat simulation; *Alien Legacy*, a sci-fi strategy game in a similar vein to the hit *Outpost; Lode Runner*, a revamp of the old '80s classic with over 150 new levels and ten underground worlds; and *Front Page Sports: Baseball. Front Page Sports: Baseball* features an action-grabbing mix of arcade action and management strategy, over 500 stats for each major league baseball player, three divisions of 30 leagues to create using complete team rosters, hi-resolution graphics and an unique camera management feature that allows the player to view the action from anywhere on the field, and it promises to be the most comprehensive baseball sim ever produced. Contact Sierra on 0734 303322.

Where's The Wookie?

If you just can't get enough of Chewie, Luke, Han and the gang, the new *Star Wars Screen Entertainment* screen saver from LucasArts will have you transfixed.

The saver, which runs through Windows, features some of the most memorable scenes from *Star Wars,* as well as exclusive behind-the-scenes information and unique encyclopedia-like modules containing detailed specifications of various *Star Wars* space craft and masses of *Star Wars* facts.

As if this wasn't enough, there is also a special message from George Lucas himself giving details on the future *Star Wars* due out towards the end of the decade. Price $35.95. Contact LucasArts on 081 960 2255.

World Cup Overdose

For those of you who just can't bear the thought of spending a night without your football fix, Supervision Entertainment presents *World Cup Soccer '94.* Based on the comprehensive book *Guide To World Soccer* by Guy Oliver, it's a fact-filled CD-ROM brimming with everything you ever wanted to know about the World Cup since the first competition in 1930, right up to World Cup USA '94.

It features over 30 minutes of video, hundreds of stills and original tournament posters, as well as a four-player soccer trivia game. With an original music score, stunning 3D graphics and ray-traced animations, this is a must for all those who can't wait for France '98. *World Cup Soccer '94* will cost £29.99. Contact Supervision Entertainment on 071 702 9391.

Magic Carpet

The Christmas of 1994 is set to go down in gaming history. Networks around the globe will be thrumming to the tune of not just *Doom II* and *Dark Forces,* but *Magic Carpet* and its 16 – yes 16 – network players as well.

The plot for *Magic Carpet* is still in the "what-plot?" stage of development, but all you need to know is that the huge, contoured fractal playing areas are rendered in 3D at disgustingly fast speeds.

You play a Persian prince flying over said landscape on his magic carpet, on a quest to find the best magic weapons, to kill the most monsters, and to build the biggest, toughest castle in Carpetdom. There is a host of up to 16 other princes and a computer player from Hell, endowed with an artificial intelligence algorithm and rumoured to be as good as lead programmer, Shaun Cooper.

Bullfrog is also working on a separate Pentium version of the game, which will run in high-resolution (640 x 480 up to 1280 x 800 with a ninja graphics card). Magic Carpet looks to be the big game of next year and is due for release in December.

SURE YOU COULD DIE, BUT THAT'S LIFE.

- The Gorene Empire is at war with the Alien Alliance. The ally you choose and the battle strategy you devise will determine who controls the Ascalon Rift.
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TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE SOFTWARE

Bulletin

VR a reality for Christmas

As stated in last month's *PC Zone*, the VFX1 VR headset from Forte Technologies is now due for a worldwide launch in November for around £650.

The unit, which is fully PC compatible, weighs in at less than two pounds, supports a standard VGA video card and simply slots into the back of your PC also comes complete with a "CyberPuck" input device which enables the player to move around in their virtual environment. Unlike other units about to hit the market later this year, the VFX1 only needs conversions of standard games rather than development from scratch and is an excellent new outlet for games developers. Several top titles will be available when the headset is launched, including iD's *Doom*, and both EA and Ocean are working on projects to be used in conjunction with the unit. Contact Zye Technology on 0293 538666.

Parallel Universe

Universe is the new graphic adventure from Core Design, the people responsible for the hit RPG, *Curse Of Enchantia* (now available as a budget title for £14.99). The game follows a similar format to its predecessor, but now benefits from added text, a more streamlined interface and a film-style storyline.

As with *Enchantia*, the story revolves around the plight of a lad called Boris, who finds himself dragged into another dimension after tampering with his eccentric uncle's mechanical invention, the "Virtual Dimension Inducer". The plot is set against the backdrop of an on-going war between two fantasy empires, and the player must explore different planets and cultures in order to free the oppressed Mekalien people from the evil clutches of Emperor Neiamises. The game features 3D rendered animations, digitised hand-painted scenes, and a rotoscoped, fully scaling main character. It is due for release at the end of September. Contact Core on 0332 297797.

High Seas Trader sets sail

Sand, sea and strategy. That's what *High Seas Trader*, the new first-person perspective trading game from Impressions, is all about. Set in the 17th/18th centuries the player must travel the seven seas buying, selling, fighting, recruiting and amassing a fortune whilst risking life and limb.

The game boasts oodles of swashbuckling gameplay with over 120 ports, each with their own political systems, markets and alliances that are adjusted depending on the player's actions and other external forces. Players can build fleets of up to 16 ships from a selection of six cargo vessels, warships and pirate ships. *High Seas Trader* is due out in November for around £39.99. Contact Impressions on 071 351 2133.

DISPATCHES

The pirated software, believed to contain obscene computerised images is currently being analysed by ELSPA investigators and the police.

In a press conference held after the raid, John Loader, chief investigator of ELSPA's Crime Unit, again emphasised how important it is for the public to maintain a vigilant attitude to pirated software and report anything suspicious to ELSPA immediately. Contact ELSPA on 0386 833810.

+++ Return flight for *Tornado* and *Falcon 3*

Digital Integration is to release twp tp[flight sims on one smashing CD for just £39.99. If you haven't got *Tornado* or the award-winning *Falcon 3.0*, it's definitely worth a look, especially as the CD-ROM version will also include the stunning *Merlin Challenge* helicopter practice sim. Contact DI on 0276 684959.

+++ Hands on *MegaRace* deal

Logitech and The Software Toolworks have joined forces to develop a new version of *MegaRace* which takes advantage of the CyberMan, including its tactile feedback and direct dimensional control. The package, which includes the innovative CyberMan controller and the number-one selling *MegaRace* game will be priced at £69.99 and is available now. Contact The Software Toolworks on 0444 246333.

+++ Going LIVE '94

If you want to know what electronic hardware will be in the shops next year, pop down to LIVE '94 at Earls Court between 20-25 September.

As well as all the latest products and innovations, visitors will be able to take in live music, have their picture taken with stars from *Beverly Hills 90210* and *The Gladiators*, and there will also be celebrity appearances from Jeremy Beadle and Toyah. Capital Radio will be running live broadcasts, and visitors will be able to play the latest games due for release in the *PC Zone* Games Arena. Tickets start from just £4 and there are special deals for families and children. Contact the ticket hotline on 0891 500 103.

+++ Five foot Ten Pack to go

What's five foot long, a few thousand megs wide and costs under 40 quid? The new CD-ROM compilation from Peel Hall Technologies, that's what. The pack is a handy five feet long fold-out wallet containing

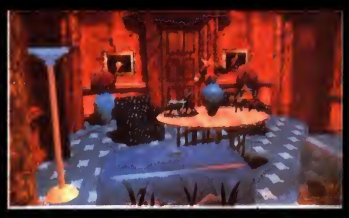
THE FIRST TRULY INTERACTIVE MOVIE

UNDER A Killing Moon

"THE NEXT MULTIMEDIA SENSATION"

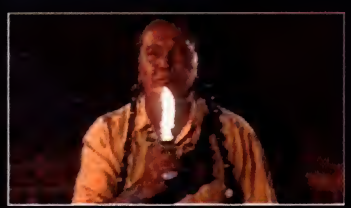
CD-ROM AND MULTIMEDIA NOW

"A STUNNING TECHNOLOGICAL ACHIEVEMENT"
PC REVIEW



"ONE THAT'S GOING TO BE WORTH WAITING FOR"
PC POWER

FEATURING...



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(THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS, NATURAL BORN KILLERS)

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MARGOT KIDDER
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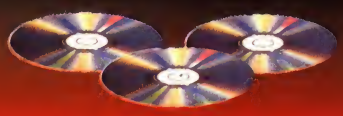

ACCESS SOFTWARE presents a CHRIS JONES production UNDER A KILLING MOON story by AARON CONNERS artistic direction by DOUG VAN DEGRIFF music by JON CLARK set design by NATHAN ZARSON, NEIL GALLOWAY, RALPH YARRON, technical direction by BRUCE WARD, BRUCE JOHNSON.

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Bulletin

DISPATCHES

ten full-version CDs including *BattleChess, Space Quest IV, Movie Select* and *PC Karaoke Family Fun* and is an excellent way of boosting your CD-ROM collection. Contact Peel Hall Technologies on 0161 436 2095.

+++ Virgin goes radio

Virgin Retail's new in-store radio station will now give air-time to games, including mini reviews, details of future releases and recommended buys. The show will last around five minutes and will be trailed in stores throughout the day.

Virgin also announced that it will be opening five more Megastores over the next couple of months in Leicester, Portsmouth, Derby, Liverpool and Southampton.

+++ Grab a Gravis and get *MS Flight Simulator* FREE!

If you haven't yet got a Gravis Analog joystick and fancy yourself as a bit of a pilot, get down to your local games shop and buy one now. For the usual price of a Gravis Analog or Analog Pro you will get a free copy of Microsoft's *Flight Simulator 5.0* thrown in.

Numbers are strictly limited so check out this deal now. Contact Gravis on 071 352 9402.

+++ Maxis Classic Compilation

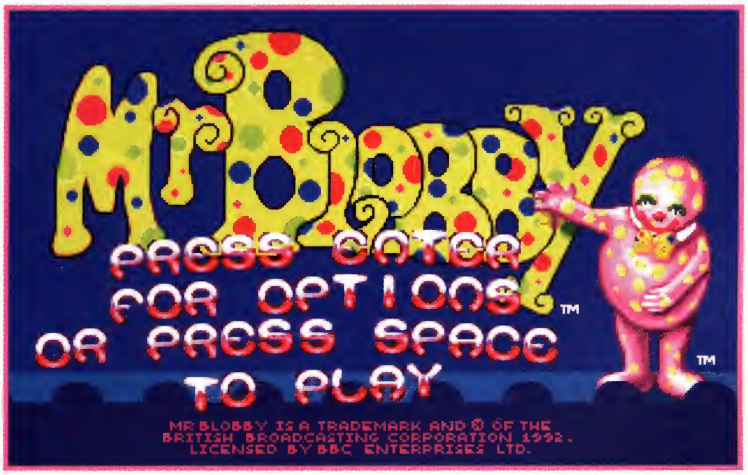
If you're one of the few who haven't yet wrestled with the joys of inner-city planning, tunnelled your way into your neighbour's pantry or juggled with the genes of a parrot and a panther, the new *Sim Classics* collection released this month must come highly recommended.

Packed in a special limited edition box, the compilation features the ground-breaking *SimCity Classic, Sim Life* and *Sim Ant* all for a measly £34.99. Contact Maxis on 071 490 2333.

+++ Music to your PC

Make music on your PC for just £85 thanks to a new offer from Turnkey. They're putting out the Goldstar GSC-X21 studio-quality sound card which contains 250 digitally recorded musical instrument sounds in ROM for only £85 + VAT. The card will play up to 16 sounds simultaneously, not counting its four on-board drum kits, and is 32-note polyphonic. It also features an MPU401 compatible MIDI interface and works in either 8- or 16-bit slots. The card comes complete with cables and a 14-day money-back guarantee. Contact Turnkey on 071 379 5148.

Blobby's Back!



Just when you thought the world had forgotten him – he's back! And what's more, he's married (presumably), and he's also a dad. Jeremy Wells strolls down to Crinkly Bottom to meet the Blobbies and take a look at the new platform extravaganza from Millenium.

Well it had to happen sooner or later didn't it? It was just a question of when, where and who. So far it's been a year of comebacks. Pink Floyd finally got it together to record a new album and embark on a world tour. The same thing's happened to the Eagles and now Blobby is back on the scene, but is his public ready for him and, more importantly, is Blobby ready for his public?

Love him or hate him, no one can deny the fact that the whole Blobby phenomenon was an absolute success in terms of marketing. Blobby was everywhere, and everywhere was Blobby crazy. You couldn't open a newspaper, turn on your TV or leaf through a magazine without Blobby beaming back at you. Well, now he's coming to a PC near you.

Does it knock spots off other platform games?

Well, not exactly, but what did you expect? Most people's reaction to seeing the game was instantly dismissive, but then poor old Blobby has become a bit of a cultish figure that most seem to love to hate.

Mister Blobby is basically a platform adventure that has the Blobbies dashing about the screen, bringing colour to the world, smashing evil nasties off the screen and throwing squashy buns at anything that moves. The Blobbies have a limited capacity to perform special whirling dervish-type moves that send all evil blighters into oblivion. They are able to swim and leap the equivalent of tall buildings. There are also a number of different items Blobby can pick up and throw to despatch the various nasties, and if all else fails he can simply launch himself high into the air and land on the unsuspecting ugly to freeze him and send him to baddie heaven.

So who's gonna buy it?

Bit of a toughie, that one. The gameplay doesn't look to be that bad once you get over your prejudices and start to play. It's all a bit like *Robocod,* though if you're expecting another *Zool* you'll be disappointed. There really is nothing new in the game, though with 60 levels to complete, it's certainly not your average licensed cop-out. The sprites are nice and large, there's plenty of variety in the way of monsters, and the backgrounds are all different. The way Blobby moves is in fact very much like *Zool* in that it's all very fast and very fluid, but not quite as polished.

Overall it's not going to challenge a hardened gamer, but then it's not supposed to. This is the kind of game you stick onto your PC when you want to shut your kid brother up or fancy some light diversion yourself. At under 20 quid it's not going to leave a large hole in your pocket and the only real down side is that when you finally complete it you won't be able to tell anyone because you'll be too embarrassed.

Anyway, Blobby's back and he's going to be big (again!). You've been warned. *Mister Blobby* will be released in October, priced £19.99. Contact Millenium on 0223 844894.

GALLUP CHARTS

So many games, so little time – these days, shopping for your PC can be a nightmare. But now, with the help of Gallup's handy household charts, you can check out what you should be playing. There's something for everyone here: full-price PC titles, budget games and even a selection of CD-ROM titles.

Top 20 Full Price Titles	
1. TIE Fighter	LucasArts/VIE
2. FIFA International Soccer	Electronic Arts
3. Theme Park	Bullfrog/Electronic Arts
4. Sim City 2000	Maxis/Mindscape
5. Frontier: Elite 2	Gametek
6. Lemmings 2	Psygnosis
7. X-Wing	LucasArts/US Gold
8. Cannon Fodder	VIE
9. Genesia	Mindscape
10. TFX	Ocean
11. Premier Manager 2	Gremlin Graphics
12. Indycar Racing	VIE
13. Flight Simulator 5	Microsoft
14. Graham Gooch World Class Cricket	Audiogenic
15. Ryder Cup Golf	Ocean
16. Doom	iD Software
17. The Settlers	Blue Byte
18. International Sensible Soccer	Renegade
19. Jurassic Park	Ocean
20. 1942: Pacific Air War	MicroProse

Top 10 PC Budget Titles	
1. Doom Levels	Gold Medal
2. Doom Levels	Titanium Seal
3. Theme Park Demo	Bullfrog/Electronic Arts
4. Sim City Classic	Hit Squad
5. Archer Maclean's Pool	Hit Squad
6. Dune	Hit Squad
7. The Secret of Monkey Island	Kixx
8. Doom Levels	Micro Star
9. Eye Of The Beholder 2	Kixx
10. Astronomy	Premier Collection

Top 10 CD-ROM Titles	
1. Theme Park	Bullfrog/Electronic Arts
2. Outpost	Sierra Online
3. The Journeyman Project	Gametek
4. Frontier: Elite 2	Gametek
5. Rebel Assault	US Gold
6. Encarta	Microsoft
7. Ishar 2 – Messengers Of Doom	Simarils
8. Myst	Brøderbund/Electronic Arts
9. TFX	Ocean
10. Sam & Max – Hit The Road	US Gold

There is nothing on Earth like it.

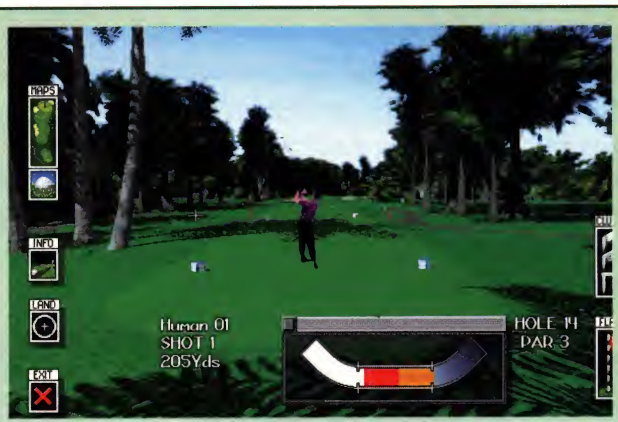
Bulletin

Campaign again and again

IF YOU'RE a bit of a rivet counter on the quiet and can rattle off the entire spec. of an M7Priest HMC as easily as you can field strip an Enfield, or fancy yourself as a bit of an armchair general, the new CD-ROM enhanced version of the classic war strategy sim *Campaign* will be right up your alley.

Featuring superb hi-res digitised photos and sampled speeches from political leaders of the time, it promises to be the most extensive and detailed war sim yet. The game includes over 250 vehicle types each with digitised photos, full details and notes and features a vast array of Russian, American, British and German tanks, artillery, support vehicles, aircraft and ships all at your disposal. Also incorporated into the game is a digitised factfinder as well as complete historical D-Day landing maps digitised on screen to aid your mission.

As if this wasn't enough, there is also a new add-on pack, *Campaign: From North Africa To Northern Europe*, now available, which includes another 25 maps covering most of the major land conflicts of the Second World War. Both are available now, priced at £39.99. Contact Empire on 081-343 9143.



World Cup Golf

You thought that it was all over, well it isn't. US Gold are hoping for yet another bout of World Cup fever, but this time it's golf. *World Cup Golf* will be released on five different formats (including PC CD-ROM) during October to tie in with this year's World Cup Golf tournament at Dorado Beach, Puerto Rico. The game promises to be the most realistic golf sim yet developed and will be based on the actual course used in the competition. Contact US Gold on 021 625 3366.

LOOK WHAT YOU COULDA WON!

Competition Winners – PC ZONE

What a wonderful world we live in! Not only do you get the best in reviews and games news, but we also get you the best competition prizes too! Listed below are the winners and runners up in our many recent competitions featured over the past few months. Well done to the winners. Don't forget to enter this month's competition in which you can win your very own video presenter – the next winner could be you!

Compaq Presario Multi-Media System/Microsoft Creative Writer/Fine Artist Competition (Issue 12)

The winner of the Compaq Pressario Multi-Media System is:

Robert Burrell, Dereham, Norfolk.

The five runners-up listed below win a copy of Microsoft's *Creative Writer:*

Chris McCarthy, Great Barr, Birmingham
T.A. King, Innsworth, Gloucester
Aidan Hutson, Galway, Eire
David Naber, Surbiton, Surrey
Josh Bannerman, Watling, Oxon

A further five runners-up listed below will receive a copy of Microsoft's *Fine Artist:*

Bill Devitt, County Durham
P.C. Dore, Hessle, North Humberside
James Reader, Exeter, Devon
Liam Green-Hughes, Castleford, Isle Of Man Peter Regan, Hollingdon, Middlesex

Winter Olympics Competition – The Skis The Limit (Issues 10, 11 & 12)

The winner of the *Winter Olympics* Competition – The Skis The Limit is:

Gill Brophy, Chandlers Ford, Hampshire

Win A Modem Competition – Doing Time On-Line (Issue 13)

The winner of the US Robotics Sportster 2400 fax modem and a free CompuServe membership pack is:

Steve Lee, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire

The winners of the four CompuServe membership packs are:

Mark Reith, Ashford, Kent
M. Gilbank, Farm Road,York
Kyle Mullen, Bicester, Oxfordshire
Alex Christow, Saffron Walden, Essex

Two For The Price Of Fun Competition – Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.0/MS-DOS 6.2 Double Pack Compo (Issue 11)

The winners of the Two For The Price Of Fun Competition are:

Tony Parish, Romford, Essex
S.P. Moon, Twickenham, Middsx.
Steve Martin, Long Eaton, Notts.
James Fitchie, Edinburgh
Anne Weatherill, Roundhay, Leeds
C.K. Webb, Cwmban, Wales
Oliver Barton, Cambridge
P.B. Reade, Rhiwbina, Cardiff
Maddi Wright, Beccles, Suffolk
Nick Andros, London

A Day At Silverstone Compo (Issue 11)

The winner of A Day At Silverstone is:

C. Lambert, Dagenham, Essex

The five runners-up (cap and poster) are:

Mr Derek Rout, Edinburgh
Mathew Wheeler, Aulesbury, Bucks
Mark Hulbert, Newbold Verdon, Leicester
David Sarah, Semilong, Northampton
M.R. Gilbank, Copmanthorpe, York

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COVER DISK

Cor blimey guv'nor, we've got not just one but two CDs for you this month. The first comes from Creative Labs (maker of *Sound Blaster*). The second is the *PC Zone* disk with loadsa goodies.

HD Disk users

Quarantine

(Gametek)

This is a new release from Gametek, and is packed full of mayhem, violence and death. For the full rundown on the game see page 30 for the exclusive Blueprint. To play *Quarantine*, you should follow the instructions below. Make the drive containing the disk current by typing for example:

A:

Then, at the DOS prompt type **PC Zone** and then follow the instructions on screen.

Once the program has installed, go to the directory the demo was installed to (the default is C: QDEMO>) and type **Install**

This will then give you a list of choices for sound cards and input devices. Once you have made your selection, go back to the directory and type **Qdemo** and off you go.

Keys

Steering	Left and right cursor keys
Accelerate	Up cursor key
Brake	Down arrow key
Hood Guns	< Space>
Map	M (Use cursor keys to select destination)
Exit Demo	< Esc >
Select Special Weapon	< Alt >
Fire Special Weapon	< Control >
Horn	< Return >
Jump	J
Normal Resolution	Q
Low Resolution	W (suitable for slower machines)
Look Left	f1
Look Ahead	f2
Look Right	f3

CD-ROM Installation

To install any of the playable demos on this month's CD, you should make the drive containing your CD current by typing D:, for example, then type PC ZONE and follow the installation instructions on the screen. We have the following plum demos for you this month:

Under a Killing Moon

(US Gold)

Under A Killing Moon is the first interactive movie and this fully playable demo features some superb graphics and excellent video sequences. The game itself requires only 4Mb of RAM and control is via the mouse. For the full low-down on the game, turn to our *Review* on page 88.

Zool 2

(Gremlin)

Zool 2 is a classic platform game and the follow-up to last year's successful *Zool*. In *Zool 2* you play the part of a ninja ET and evade the various pitfalls scattered around. Once the game has loaded, you should press the <Esc> key to bring up the options menu and then press **f5** to configure the keys. Then off you trot.

SuperKarts

(Manic Media Productions)

SuperKarts is a new release from MMP. The program is, as the name suggests, a karting game, and has adopted the successful console style of viewing. Once the game has been installed, you are taken through the options menu, which allows you to configure the game. After that you are into the race itself. The controls themselves are quite simple:

A	Accelerate
Z	Brake
<Alt>	Reverse
<Space>	Turbo
<	Left
>	Right

In addition, some House Tracks have been written specially for the game by Flandish, Factions and D&F. Two of these tunes will play during the *SuperKarts* game, and you can also play these in an audio CD. They are listed as tracks number 2, 3 & 4

Off The Boards Shareware Selection

This month's *Off The Boards* is a compilation

IMPORTANT

Some of the programs on the CD are shareware, and as such are supplied as an evaluation service to our readers. If you like the programs and intend to continue using them, you should register them with the publishers concerned. In return you will receive updated versions, extra levels and loads of other stuff. The cover disk has been virus checked; however, neither Dennis Publishing, PC Zone or any associated companies can be deemed liable for any problems that may arise from use of this disk.

AWE 32 Demo CD

This month's disk from Creative Labs is a little taste of what you can achieve with an AWE 32 sound card. It was reviewed in last month's issue and received a rating of 90%! As the reviewer Mark Burgess put it: "The AWE32 will let you talk to your computer... act like a synthesiser and turn gameplaying into a truly spiritual experience".

The audio tracks were produced on a standard AWE32 (except for the vocals on track three which had a card with 8Mb of RAM), and you can play these back through an audio CD player (or your CD-ROM drive if you have the relevant software). The track listing is on the CD, but for lazy sods out there, here it is again:

Track 1 :	**The Midi data, *don't* even think of playing this in an audio CD, you'll blow the speakers and the amp!**
Track 2 :	**Intro/Mars (from Holst's *Planet Suite*).**
Track 3 :	***Relax* (made infamous by Frankie Goes To Hollywood), with vocals as a Midi Track.**
Track 4 :	***Crazy* (as in Seal).**
Track 5 :	***Georgia On My Mind.***
Track 6 :	***Jump* (Van Halen).**

The MIDI files on track one can be played back on any sound card, and were put together by Music Sales. The company also has a new product entitled *Fifty No 1 Midi Hits on CD-ROM* and, funnily enough, it contains 50 Midi files of No 1 hits. It offers GM and GS support, as well as enhanced versions for the AWE 32. For a full rundown on Music Sales products, you can contact Pro Music on 0284 765765. For further details on the AWE32 or any other Sound Blaster card, you should contact Creative Labs on 0743 248590.

Contact Numbers

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of the latest shareware releases. For the full info, see the *Off The Boards* section this month on page 120.

As well as all these fab playable programs, we also have:

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Doom -file xxxxx.wad (Where xxxxx is the name of the file)

The UNP file

Sorry, this should have been on last month's Disk. Apologies to all Hackmasters out there.

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If you would like to get your hands on a free copy of *SuperKarts*, enter our competition for the chance to win one of 25 copies up for grabs. What's more, the first correct answer we receive will win a free karting session at the prestigious F1 track in London.

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PC QUARANTINE

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If your disks are being awkward, you can call the technical help line:

Matthew
0274 736990
9am – 4pm weekdays only)

• Please note that this help line is for HD disks only, for CDs see CD help section.

• If you are advised that the disk is faulty and needs to be returned, send it in a padded envelope with two 19p stamps to:

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BD4 7BH

CD Help

If you have a problem installing any of the programs on the CD, then you can call:

Miles Tudor
071 917 7693
(2pm – 6pm Weekdays only)

If you are calling either help line, then please take note of the following points:

• If possible, have your computer operating and near to the phone when you call.

• If your computer isn't near a phone, note as much information as possible, system type, resolution etc. and the nature of the fault.

• Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you ring.

Colonization

PUBLISHER: MicroProse | PRICE: tba

TELEPHONE: 0454 326532 | RELEASE DATE: October

Since creating *Civilization*, one of the greatest strategy games ever written, games design guru Sid Meier has been concentrating on a wealth of projects for other platforms. But now he has returned to the PC and is currently putting the finishing touches to the sequel. Daniel Emery goes behind the scenes to take a sneak peek.

I KNOW THAT at least one literary snob is going to write in and chastise me for doing so, but I'm going to do it anyway. Do what? Draw an analogy between computer games and novels, that's what. The majority of computer games fall into the Jackie Collins/Harold Robbins class of book: trashy, formulaic, but very popular. A good example is *Leisure Suit Larry*. Then there are the cult books, that spring up out of nowhere but gain a huge and loyal following, like Jack Kerouac's *On The Road*. The obvious computer game counterpart is *Doom*. There are a few books which, while attaining classic status, can be heavy going unless you're in the right frame of mind: *Ulysses*, for example, or *The Naked Lunch*, or in a computer games frame of reference, *Harpoon*. And finally, there are a few (very few, mind), that are undisputed classics, destined to influence other works for a long time to come: *War And Peace*, *Heart Of Darkness*, *Dougal And The Blue Cat*. There are so few games that come instantly to mind in this category: *Elite*, *Lemmings*, *Sim City*, and, of course, the immensely successful *Civilization*.

Created by the legendary Sid Meier (the brains behind classics like *Pirates* and *Railroad Tycoon*), *Civilization* is a strategy game unlike any other. It simulates the growth of a civilisation from its humble beginnings as a wandering tribe to a huge space-faring nation. It is so massive in scope, and so absorbing that, three years on, it's still in the PC charts.

Colonization has a lot in common with *Civilization*, but it shouldn't be thought of simply as *Colonization II*, because although it adopts a number of the better features from its predecessor, it also breaks some fresh ground.

History lesson

The background to the game is quite straightforward. Back in 1492 Christopher Columbus discovered a rather large lump of land we now know as America. The British in true style moved in and took it over, kicking both the Dutch and the French out of the road in the processes. Eventually the Colony, being so far away from London's influence, got restless, rebelled and declared independence. This, of course, led to the American War of Independence, and ultimately to savoury things like a democratic republic, and rather less savoury things like MacDonalds and a version of rounders replacing cricket as a national game. This is what *Colonization* sets out to simulate.

(Above) A mass exodus of blacksmiths to the New World looms – good job that Portillo's not in charge of immigration policy.

(Below) Trying to turn Quebec into the ideal Little House On The Prairie location.

New World Sympathy

Colonization is essentially a re-enactment of the founding of the United States, and the *Civilization* aspect plays a big part in terms of founding towns, allocating resources and planning ahead.

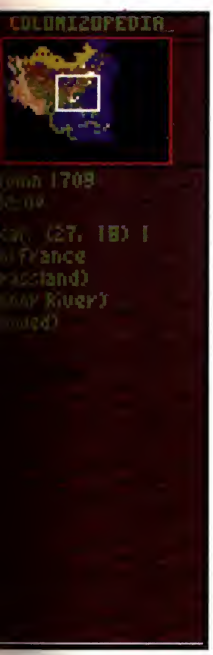
There are two different scenarios to the game. There's the realistic American scenario with a geographically correct map, and a set up that is identical every time. The second scenario is a randomly generated map which will come as a welcome relief once you've played the historical scenario a few times.

The game begins with the player controlling one of four nationalities: British, French, Spanish or Dutch. All the powers are present in the game and they're all staking their claim to the New World. You have to expand at a greater rate than the competition, make yourself more powerful and deal with the foreigners on a diplomatic level (i.e. declare war, make peace, shrug them off, hop into bed with them, or whatever).

As the game progresses, a second aspect comes into play. As your population grows and your military strength increases, there is an ever increasing possibility of fomenting rebellion. At the start your colony is 100 per cent loyal to the King. But as unrest grows you coax your population to support the rebels until you eventually get to a stage where you can declare independence. However, once you do this, you have to fight off the armies of the controlling nation who don't take kindly to unruly Yanks.

Civilised pursuits

Players of *Civilization* will feel instantly at home with the control interface. Once



(Above left) A difficult task as you attempt to make Canada interesting. (Above right) Football yobbos prepare to invade.

again, the game is tile-based, and troops, ships and other units can move a fixed number of tiles each turn. As they do, hidden parts of the landscape are gradually revealed to the player. Having established colonies at beneficial locations, it's time to allocate production, research and manage diplomatic relationships. Within each town, the player can determine which types of building to construct and what units to station there.

MicroProse has evidently put a fair bit of work into the game engine: the graphics are slicker and more professional looking and the tiles scroll smoothly. Fonts and general presentation have also been improved. *Colonization* has all the elements of *Civilization* that made it such a classic, but the more confined scope of this second game, rather than resulting in a less appealing game, has focused the gameplay to the extent that it is far easier to keep track of the finer details of your mini-empire. If you are familiar with *Civilization* you will realise that these improvements have attended to the two main criticisms of the original game. Our early impressions are that *Colonization* is not going to disappoint any fans of *Civilization* and should be a must-buy for anyone who has yet to try the original game. ZZ

(Below) Bored with their gites, the French busily prepare to hit the New World.

european

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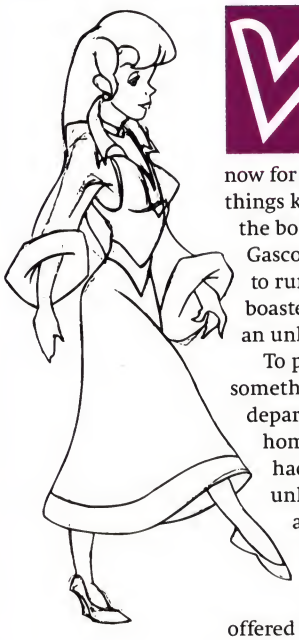
PC ZONE AUGUST 94

King's Quest VII

The Prince-Less Bride

PUBLISHER: Sierra On-Line	PRICE: TBA
TELEPHONE: 0734 303322	RELEASE DATE: December

Whilst most of us in the office can usually be found blasting our way through another batch of nasties in tunnels, tearing about in an IndyCar or hoofing it up the pitch with Man Utd., our resident cutey, Jeremy Wells, insists on sitting quietly in a corner with his thumb in his mouth talking to the fairies and goblins that inhabit the fairy tale fantasy world of the *King's Quest* series. We told him to preview the latest installment or his favourite teddy gets it.



WHEN the first in the *King's Quest* series of adventures was released way back in the early '80s (in those days when you could buy a house worth 90 grand now for 60, mobile phones were those things kids pushed around with wheels on the bottom and the most familiar Gascoigne was Bamber) it was designed to run on IBM's new machine which boasted a powerful 16-bit processor and an unheard of 256K of memory.

To promote its release, IBM wanted something special in the software department to show off on their new home-user machine that, they claimed, had "graphic and sound capabilities unheard of in the industry." They approached Ken and Roberta Williams to develop a game that would show the world how great their new machine was and offered to fund the whole project. A year later the original *King's Quest* adventure game was released and immediately became the industry's hottest game. The rest, as they say, is history.

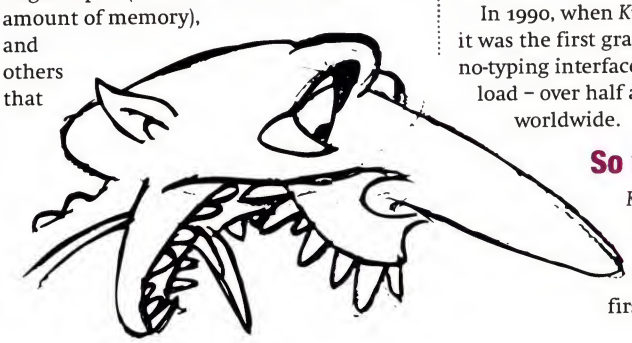
Slow train coming

In the five years that followed, there were only minor changes in the technology underlying adventure games. Graphics got better and the stories behind the games improved dramatically. The musical scores also became a lot more competent and professional composers such as William Goldstein, were hired to perform the score as in *King's Quest IV*. However, many adventure games were let down by the lack of a user-friendly interface which only served to alienate the player and often interrupt gameplay. In 1989, Roberta Williams set about changing how a player communicated with an adventure game. "Too frequently players were wasting time trying to figure out what we called something rather than just enjoying the game," remarks husband Ken, "If there was a trunk in a room, we would try to recognise a player typing in 'look in the trunk, open chest, open case' etc., but invariably, someone would become frustrated because the computer couldn't understand something they felt was completely rational, like 'lift the lid off the box'."

The new King's Quest has a distinctly "Disneyesque" feel to it, and is more vibrant than ever.

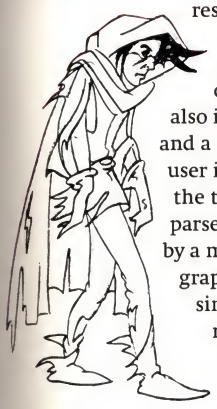
It was a hurdle that many games designers had attempted to cross, some by including what seemed like an infinite number of possibilities that the adventurer might tap in (which used a ridiculous amount of memory), and others that attempted to guide the player by giving so few realistic options that the player could positively roar through the game. Consequently, efforts to involve the players further usually only served to alienate them, as gameplay and plot were sacrificed for huge vocabularies or fantastic visuals which attempted to sweep them along. "Roberta wanted to find a way to make the players feel more a part of the story by allowing them to manipulate objects in the world directly," maintains Ken, "In real life, if you want to open a chest you just reach over and open it. That became her goal."

In 1990, when *King's Quest V* was released it was the first graphic adventure to use the no-typing interface and it sold by the lorry load – over half a million copies worldwide.



So what's new?

King's Quest VI CD saw the adventure series being taken a stage further when it became Sierra's first game to use high-



resolution graphics for the user interface and character close-ups. The game also included speech and a more advanced user interface. Gone was the traditional text parser, it being replaced by a more intuitive graphical cursor. By simply clicking the right mouse button, you cycle through four all-purpose actions: Walk, Talk, Look and Touch. Select the object to be acted upon and then press the left mouse button. Anyone who has used the interface before will slip comfortably into *King's Quest VII*. It uses the same easy-to-use commands as well as a hidden top-down menu, which offers control of inventory items and game controls like Save, Restore and Speed. It really is one of the most simple things to use and makes exploring the vast environment an absolute joy, leaving you free to concentrate on the plot of the game.

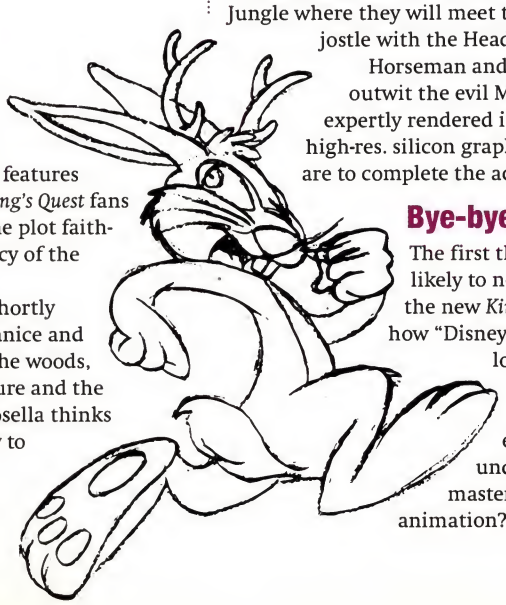
The fairy tale continues

Although the latest installment is, like the other adventures in the series, self-contained, it features many characters that *King's Quest* fans will recognise, whilst the plot faithfully carries on the legacy of the familiar Daventry folk.

We take up the plot shortly after *King's Quest VI*. Valanice and Rosella are walking in the woods, discussing Rosella's future and the benefits of marriage. Rosella thinks that she is not yet ready to make such a huge commitment, but her mother disagrees. As the discussion grinds to a halt, Rosella sits down by a pool, while Valanice sits on a nearby log. Rosella gazes deep into the pool while her mother continues her monologue on how her daughter should get hitched as soon as possible. As she gazes into the water, a door seems to appear at the bottom of the pool and Rosella begins to see beautiful visions of Fairyland. Her mind in a turmoil, she suddenly leaps up and jumps into the pool and disappears. Her mother, shocked at her daughter's behaviour, runs to the edge of the pool and plunges in after her.

Throughout the game the player gets to play each of the two characters, with the action flipping from Rosella to her mother, each "chapter" ending in a cliffhanger situation to maintain interest. There are eight massive chapters or sections to explore in all, as well as luxurious opening animation sequences to help set the scene and carry the story along.

King's Quest VII is approximately twice the size of the last romp, with a massive playing arena in which to lose yourself, spanning two CD-ROMs. Players will have to make their way through sun-baked deserts, troll-infested labyrinths and the wacky Rubber Jungle where they will meet the Troll King, jostle with the Headless Horseman and attempt to outwit the evil Malicia (all expertly rendered in beautiful high-res. silicon graphics) if they are to complete the adventure.



Bye-bye John

The first thing you're likely to notice about the new *King's Quest* is how "Disneyesque" it looks. "Is this a concerted effort to emulate the undisputed master of animation?" I find myself wondering. "It's all very inspired by Disney's Alladin," admits lead artist, Dennis Durrell, "What we've tried to do is make the latest *King's Quest* much more vibrant and colourful and lose the grey." Scattered over his desk lie numerous beautifully drawn backgrounds: a dusky desert scene, a blazing sunset and a dark and mysterious cavern, all ready for scanning. "Each one takes an artist about a week to complete from start to finish. At the moment we're using 12 in-house artists who each spend approximately a day or so sketching the scene out and then three or four days are spent painting it, depending on how complicated it is."

On the walls covering the small office are plastered sketches of some of the many characters, old and new, that will feature in *King's Quest VII*. They too could be right out of any Disney epic. "It's the biggest thing we've done in terms of sheer logistics," remarks Dennis as he casts his proud eye over the massive gallery of characters. "*King's Quest VII* is twice as big as *King's Quest VI* in terms of characters, playing areas and sheer playability. We've been working on it for just over seven months now and it's definitely the most labour-intensive project we've ever attempted. It's gonna be big, and I mean BIG!"

Big, beautiful and better than ever by the looks of things and bundled onto two, yes two CD-ROMs. Here's to *King's Quest VIII*!

Each background takes about a week to complete from start to finish. There are more characters and places to visit than ever before.

The game features loads of characters - both old and new.

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SUMMIT

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PUBLISHER: US Gold | PRICE: TBA

TELEPHONE: 021 625 3388 | RELEASE DATE: November '94

Seeing as he's a bit of a boy racer from Essex, we thought we'd save Jeremy Wells the trouble of breaking into yet another RS Escort to show off his handbrake turns and send him down to Wales with US Gold for an exclusive look at their new rally game, *PowerDrive*, instead. This was finally his chance to try his hand at the real thing and not in a car park.

IF YOU'VE ever watched any rally driving on the telly, or have even gone so far as pulling on your wellies to stand around on some windswept hillside just to watch a muddy car roar past you, you will know that rally driving is quite different from "normal" racing driving. For a start, to be allowed to enter you have to have a car with more lights on the front than a small Christmas tree, while the race itself normally takes place on some Godforsaken track, deep within a muddy forest and invariably includes more potentially life-threatening bends than a bunch of over-ripe bananas injected with arsenic. It's very fast, very muddy and very demanding for both the car and the driver, not to mention the poor co-driver who must sit there as cool as a cucumber reading out his pace notes as the car flies around hairpins at a seemingly impossible speed, shaving the bark from the trees as it fishtails down the track.

Third time lucky

Whereas there are more driving games available on the PC than you can shake a greasy back axle at, there have been only a couple of attempts to recreate all the speed and excitement of rally driving on the PC. *Micro Machines* was a step in the right direction, but, with its slick sprites and cutesy background tracks, it was aimed more at the console market, leaving little in the way of serious gameplay. *Lombard RAC Rally* from Europress, on the other hand, went for realism in a big way and also concentrated on the management side of things, and as a result the game was more of a rally simulation than a fast-paced driving game.

With this in mind, US Gold have plumped for a format that is, in truth, a bit of a halfway house; incorporating all the action of actually driving a rally car, with a bit of management detail thrown in for good measure. The result is a game that, when finished, will feature eight different cars, ranging from a Mini to a Celica, and a massive 64 different courses spanning eight countries, each with different types of terrain and weather. It also features special training courses.

The player starts the game at the beginning of the season and must work his/her way around the international circuit in a rally-prepared Group N car (either a Mini Cooper or Fiat Cinquecento) by successfully

Test your driving skills to the limit over the toughest courses, in the most perilous conditions and in the fastest cars in US Gold's new action-packed driving game, PowerDrive.

completing a number of stages in countries all over the world. The aim of the game is to complete each stage in the time required while maintaining a race-worthy car and, of course, win bundles of prize money in the process. If the player consistently finishes in the top five, he is given the opportunity to upgrade his car to the next competition class.

Mirror, signal – power slide!

The most impressive thing about the game so far is not the different cars, the number of different courses, the diversity of terrains, weather or the options, but the way in which the cars handle – it really is the closest thing you will get to stepping inside a real rally car on the PC. You can, of course, attempt to complete each stage by driving sedately around the course just as you could in a real competition, but this will most likely have you crawling along the track at a snail's pace and ending up with a lousy finishing time. A better tactic is to thrash the hell out of the car, take the corners at speed, use your handbrake and let the car fly out on the bends, just like the pros do – pushing the car and yourself to the limit. That's what rally driving is really all about, and that's the way to play *Power Drive* – hard and fast.

Each of the eight cars in *PowerDrive* handle differently, depending on whether it's front- or rear-wheel drive, the length of the wheel base, brake horse power etc., and each car needs to be mastered if you are to get the best time on each stage. You must also try to get to grips with the different techniques used in rally driving, such as the handbrake turn (for taking hairpin bends at speed), the pendulum swing (for taking fast left/right bends) and the power drive (for sliding through tight chicanes) in order to make up essential time. It is only then that you will qualify for the next round and be allowed to progress onto the next stage and country.

Controlling your car is best done with a joypad like the Gravis, although joystick and keyboard options are available, but, either way, quick reactions are needed to keep the car on the track and in one piece. Your car will automatically follow a line through the course to help you, leaving you to concentrate on the speed and handling. The controls are a simple left and right affair along with accelerate and handbrake, which must be used if you are to take the fastest line through the course. The gears are automatic and shown on the screen in the form of an "H" just to let you know where you are, and you can basically leave those alone, unless you need to reverse in order to get yourself out of a tight spot. This can be engaged by a simple push of the third button on the joypad.

There are eight different cars to choose from, each with its own individual handling characteristics.

Smash it up – I'll take it

You start the game either with a humble, little Mini Cooper or a Fiat Cinquecento and a couple of grand in your pocket to help you on your way. It costs about $1000 dollars to enter each race and, depending on how well you do, you can expect a tidy sum if you win a stage outright or just come top within your class. Every time you race, your car inevitably sustains a certain degree of damage, depending on how you drove. If you went around the stage hitting every large brown thing with a leaf on it, the chances are your car won't be able to enter the next stage without a lot of work and expense, and it would be serious decision-making time.

At the end of each race you are given a damage report on your car and you then have to decide which bits to repair and which to leave until later. This introduces an element of strategy into the game as you attempt to juggle your finances while trying to keep your car in a race-worthy condition so that it will be allowed to remain in the competition. Should you blow all of your money on new tyres and spots because the next stage is on gravel at night? Or will you take a chance and rely on your driving skills to see you through and save your money towards a better car? If you don't make the stage you could be out of the competition altogether, but hey, look at that shiny new Celica over there, you sure could lead the pack with that baby on your trailer. Dare you risk entering a stage with a car that even Arthur Daley wouldn't sell on, or do you put your money back into the car you've got?

You're out of the competition when your car is so damaged that it is beyond repair, or when you just can't afford to keep it race-worthy. You need enough dosh to enter each stage of the competition. If you spend all of your money on kitting out your car you won't be able to enter any races, so keep an eye on that cheque book.

If you win a race, you get prize money (the sum depending on how prestigious the race) and you can either put this back into maintaining your current car in top condition or save it in order to buy another car in the next class where the stakes and rewards are much higher.

As the game progresses, you travel across the globe entering different competitions, each boasting different climates, terrains and surfaces, until you finally end up in good ole Blighty once more, where you have to enter the final and most difficult stage. If you manage to complete this you can then opt to start all over again, although this time you will have a top-class car with which to roar round the easier stages, though as the weather is random you won't always be racing in exactly the same environment.

You can also opt to keep the car you chose at the start of the game and put all of your money into keeping it totally race-worthy, only selling it once you have completed the whole competition. This allows you to race every stage with every car for even more diversity, though as it would take around seven hours to complete the competition (and that's when you know exactly what you're doing) this is a feature of the game that most will probably fail to appreciate.

As well as having the player compete against the clock on a number of stages, each country will also have a skills stage where the player must successfully manoeuvre his car around a purpose-built course, which includes controlled skids, slides, handbrake turns and reversing into tight spots for extra points. This is to serve as a kind of practice level to prepare the driver for the challenges on the next stage and to give the player a chance to put some of his skills into practice without damaging his car too much. Before you enter the competition there is also a practice area provided, which will allow you to have a go in your car in order to become familiar with the controls and the way that the vehicle handles.

(Above) What a nice new rally car. (Not for long!)
(Top left) You'll often need to use the handbrake on turns.

Tips of the Trade

How do they do that?

Rally drivers are required to master a number of quite spectacular driving manoeuvres in order to get them through a course as fast as possible. Each of these manoeuvres has to be mastered if you are to complete the courses in *PowerDrive*.

The handbrake turn

This technique is used to change the direction of the car very quickly without losing too much speed, such as when going through a tight hairpin bend. The driver approaches the bend at speed, drops the clutch and goes down to first gear, turning the car into the corner. As the car begins to turn, the driver pulls up the handbrake to send the rear of the car quickly around the bend. The driver then brings up the clutch and accelerates out of the corner.

The pendulum swing

This technique gets its name from the way the car swings from side to side when going through a tight corner. The driver approaches the bend at speed and, applying the brakes, steers the car in the opposite direction to the bend. At just the right moment he swings the car in the opposite direction, throwing the back of the vehicle out into the bend and putting the car into a controlled slide using the momentum built up by the first turn. The driver then accelerates hard out of the bend, allowing the car to right itself as the power kicks in.

The power drive

This is used to power the car through a chicane without losing too much speed. The driver brakes as he goes into the first turn and then accelerates hard out of it, throwing the rear of the car around the bend, lifting his foot off the accelerator as he turns into the next bend, repeating the manoeuvre into the next turn, and powering the car through the bends.

Slippin' and a slidin'

Once you have mastered the basic controls you can start to experiment with the "feel" of the car and throw it around the bends using the accelerator and brake to make the car go into a controlled slide. At first this isn't as easy as it looks, but as your skill and confidence grow it soon becomes second nature as you start to automatically weigh up the quickest way in and out of a bend. Each track throws up a new challenge for the driver who will have to cope with ice, sand, gravel, tarmac, wind and rain as he progresses across the international rally circuit.

Weather is random for added realism and there are even night runs to complete at various stages in the game to test your skills that bit further.

There are loads of different courses to complete over many different terrains, as well as special "skills stages" to fully test your skill behind the wheel.

The angle of view is a sort of isometric 45 degrees which leaves you looking down on the car from above and to the side. This sounds a bit unusual, but is actually quite intelligent as you can see a large part of the track in front of you with the car roughly in the middle of the screen at all times.

However, when you accelerate hard, the screen moves slightly ahead to allow you to see more of the track. A large arrow indicating the direction and severity of the next bend flashes up in front of the car to warn you of what to expect (acting in the place of the co-driver's pace notes) as you are required to drive each track blind with no warm up – just like the real thing.

The actual look and feel of the game is already very polished, despite it being far from complete. The programmers have all done a spot of rally driving themselves to get a feel of what it's really like to drive through a course at high speed, and this is reflected in the programming – particularly in the way in which the cars handle on screen. The sprites are large and colourful, and each of the eight cars were drawn and then shrunk to size using powerful graphics software for added detail. The various backgrounds and terrains are also detailed and quite varied, and the effects of the rain and sleet change the way they look and handle – even the rain looks pretty impressive.

There was no sound to speak of, suffice to say that the guys at Rage, who are programming the game for US Gold, are looking to include a thumping soundtrack and sampled sounds for extra realism. The game looks absolutely stunning on the SNES and, although the PCtends to have

trouble handling this sort of high-speed scrolling, the game (which is being converted onto the PC by Denton Designs) looks as though it will be able to hold its own when compared to other driving games in the PC arena.

At present the game is being designed to allow four players to compete against each other, though sadly they will not be able to actually race against each other, but rather race against the clock, just like real rally competitions. However, there will be a computer-controlled car to race against, which is one mean opponent. This car will constantly fight to take the best line through the course, nudge you out of the way and generally make your race as difficult as possible. However, because they're such softies at Rage, the designers are considering giving the player the option to race alone, just to make things that little bit easier.

There is also talk of releasing a network version that will allow players to play head to head without the compromise of a split screen, though this is still very much in the "Can we/shall we?" stage of development. So we'll just have to wait and see.

Power Drive will run on a 386 (although the faster your machine the better) and is best played with a joypad, such as the Gravis. It will be soon be released on floppy and CD-ROM simultaneously and at the same price. The CD version will feature an enhanced introduction.

TORNADO

FREE INSIDE
CD ROM version:
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"A superb simulation with enormous attention to detail" PC Review - 9/10
"Tornado is simply brilliant. The depth. The realism." PC Zone - 93%, Classic Award

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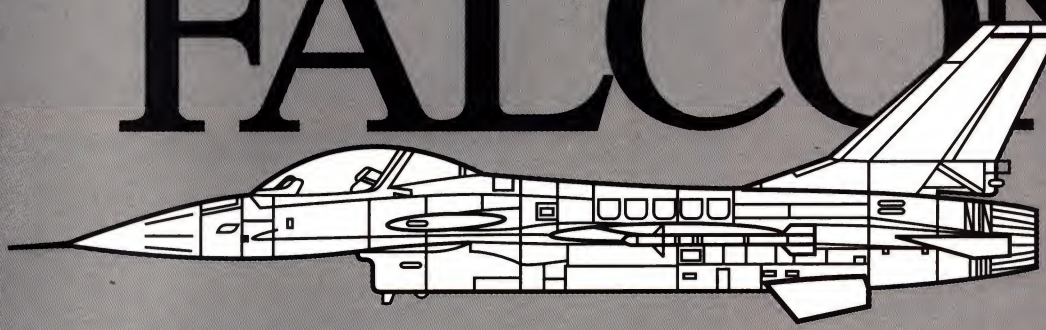

"The graphics are stunning, the gameplay is vast, varied and gripping" PC Review - 9/10
"Superb realism and edge of your seat action" PC Home - 90%

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Blueprint

Quarantine

PUBLISHER: Gametek | PRICE: tba

TELEPHONE: 0753 553445 | RELEASE DATE: October

There can have been few products that have had as much impact on games software as *Doom*. It has set a new standard for 3D shoot 'em ups. But while most developers are happy to create uninspired rip-offs, Gametek, in conjunction with Imagexcel, has set out to take the genre somewhere new... Laurence Scotford explains.

THE PLOT of Gametek's *Quarantine* reads like a 1980s science-fiction film. In the not too distant future, the city of Kemo has degenerated into an uncontrollable, crime-ridden district. The situation gets so bad that the authorities decide to wall off Kemo and treat it as a self-managing high-security prison.

The protagonist, Drake Edgewater, is a cab driver trapped in Kemo with the rest of the population. Edge drives a reconditioned '59 checker cab which also serves as his home and office. It's no ordinary cab, though, because he has redesigned it to accept bolt-on weapons and other upgrades. Deciding that he would rather live in the outside world than within the dark and dangerous environment of Kemo, he sets off in search of Orion, a vertical propulsion system he had discovered some years earlier. With this attached to his cab, he hopes he'll one day make the break.

Quarantine, from Gametek, is like Doom with cars – and then something extra on top.

Not all the buildings are significant, but they are all pretty sturdy. Smash your cab into too many of them and you'll end up with so much scrap metal.

The plot is similar to John Carpenter's classic film *Escape From New York*. I asked Rod Humble, the game's executive producer, whether the design team had been influenced by this film.

"No, the original plot from Gametek (written by myself), was called *Bloods* and focused on gang warfare. In this the player would do drug runs and "hits" in a major city. However, after revision, we sent the game out to Imagexcel and its collective genius reworked the design and came up with *Quarantine*, a far superior game."

Doom on wheels?

Imagine *Doom* with cars and, visually at least, you'll be close to imagining *Quarantine*. Unlike many companies which have jumped on the 3D shoot 'em up bandwagon, Gametek has come up with an engine which is just as smooth and fast as iD's. Rod, however, is keen to point out the differences. "Remember we are simulating vehicles, not people," he told me, "so we have different needs to *Doom* for which the Imagexcel engine does a better job. I am quite happy to have the best vehicle combat game and they have the best man-to-man combat game. What else can you say?"

One criticism levelled at *Doom* was that the action was the same throughout. It looks as if *Quarantine* may be saved from the same fate, largely because it is based on missions and building up your character and vehicle. The programmer, Ed Zolnieryk, has also taken great pains to create a detailed and involving plot. "The focus is on delivering your fares and killing a certain person rather than out and out survival," explains Rod.

Blood, guts and "kids' stuff"

Aside from the fast and smooth 3D graphics, *Quarantine* is characterised by extreme violence. The other vehicles explode when you hit them, and pedestrians become so much gore on your windscreen as you plough through them. Gametek made a conscious decision from the earliest stages of the game's development to major on violence. It plans to include a strong warning on the box to prevent any minor from buying the game, but beyond that to leave it up to the individual consumers to decide whether or not the game is to their taste.

The development team has strong views on the whole issue of violence in computer games. "I do not wish to see our industry relegated to 'kids stuff'," Rod states emphatically. "I think computer games are going through the same transformation that animation has. Recently, animation (mainly from Japan) has appeared containing sexual and violent themes. (Check out *Legend Of The Overfiend*.)

The problem has been that animation is regarded as children's media. This must now change as it has

At any time you can call up a map of the city and set a destination for your tracking device to follow.

When you've acquired some cash from picking up fares, you can pop into an upgrade centre and buy yourself some better hardware.

already changed for comics and will, I believe, change for computer games. The industry must rate itself, thereby giving consumers choice over what they buy.

What you cannot have is the whole industry put into one category and then anything outside that category getting banned. This farce may well happen in England (remember *Nightrap*?). Computer games must be held to the same standard as books or cinema, not a higher one. As for the growing lobby against violence and adult themes, beyond rating games – which is a good idea – we must fight it. Write to your MP or congressman and explain that you support freedom of expression. It's your choice: fight censorship or relegate our industry to the creative trash can!" Phew...

Will he escape?

Imagexcel – programmers Kevin Hoare, Ed Zolnieryk and Andy Brownbill, and artists Greg Bick and Ray Larabie – has been working on the engine for over a year now and the game has been in development since last December. Currently the game features checker cabs, regular and twin motorcycles and dirt bikes, sportster and compact cars, junkers, rigs, vans and front end loading trucks, hovering police vehicles and four-by-four offroaders. If the team has time before the game's release it also plans to include assassin vehicles and other more exotic forms of transport.

It's also possible that the game will support some of the virtual reality devices mentioned in the Virtual Reality feature *(see page 77)*. Whatever happens, it does seem that Gametek has successfully married fast 3D action with role-playing elements. Whether the game will be good enough to keep your attention until Drake escapes remains to be seen.

Blueprint

SuperKarts

PUBLISHER: Manic Media Productions Ltd | PRICE: £29.99

TELEPHONE: 0865 726544 | RELEASE DATE: October

The Grid – choose which country you want to represent.

It's fast, it's furious and it's got more skids than Damon Hill's underpants. It's also great fun and very addictive – and it's completely legal. No, it's not the latest Ronco cork popper – it's Manic Media's rip roarin' kart racing game. We sent Jeremy Wells trackside for a sneak preview.

IF YOU'RE lucky enough to have a CD-ROM drive and have bought the CD-ROM version of this magazine then you will probably already know how utterly brilliant *SuperKarts* is having played it on our exclusive demo (if you haven't, go and play it now and then finish reading this a bit later).

If, on the other hand, you haven't got a CD-ROM drive, your best friend who has got one has gone on holiday and hasn't asked you to water the plants or look after the cat and you can't "borrow" their machine, then *Bummer!* You'll have to wait until the final version is released next month.

Simply the best hands-on driving game we've ever come across. Put it in pole position!

To put it mildly it is quite the best hands-on driving game I have ever come across. Not only does it look good, but the handling is absolutely spot on thanks to a new, sophisticated games engine. Although the chaps have only been working on *SuperKarts* for a little over four months, they've spent a lot of time getting the handling of the car just right and it's definitely paid off. You can throw your kart into bends, power out of corners, skid through chicanes and generally do anything you can in a real kart and it actually feels as though you are doing it. The graphics are bright and smooth, and the animation is very fluid indeed. You can view or drive your kart from any angle, zoom in and out, tilt the angle of view, adjust the frame speed and steering sensitivity, set the number of laps in a race and generally set things up to be as comfortable as you like.

The shape of things to come

The game has been designed to take the best elements of arcade-style driving games, namely fast and furious action, and combine it with a management race option for lasting playability. As a result, you can either enter a single race or opt to enter the SuperKart Championships. Either way, you race against seven other drivers from around the world, and can choose which country you wish to represent. In the world championship you get to race in a total of eight different circuits in eight different countries, each with their own particular surfaces and conditions. In Russia, for example, you'll be sliding around on an ice-covered track, whilst in Oz you'll be haring round the outback, no doubt avoiding the

(Above)
The car handles brilliantly giving the game a truly "real" feel.

odd roo. Players must begin the tournament with a bottom of the range 50cc kart and must finish in the top three in every race in order to progress to the next level.

During the race there are various power-ups, fuel, supergrip tyres, etc. to pick up and the better you do in each race, the more you can add to your kart in terms of fuel capacity, turbos and so on.

In the final version you will also be required to make pitstops during a race to re-fuel or to repair damage to your kart sustained during the race and you will get points for number of karts passed and lapped. There will also be bonus tracks to complete if you do particularly well where you will be able to pick up extra bonuses to boost the capacity of your kart.

Although the game works well with keyboard controls, the final version will also be joystick, joypad and even Thrustmaster compatible for a true white-knuckle experience and there will also be an eight-player network facility so you can race with your mates.

SuperKarts looks like being a sure fire winner when the final version is released ("any day now" we are assured). Although the version on show at the moment is unfinished it still looks great and plays quite brilliantly. Miss it at your peril.

Graphics and animation are stunningly smooth and there's a stonking soundtrack to boot.

(Left) You can alter the view, angle and change just about anything and everything you like.

Vox Pop

We asked a *PC Zone* reader, James Woods, to give his thoughts on how *SuperKarts* compared to his favourite driving game, *Super Mario Kart* on the Super Nintendo.

"*Super Mario Kart* is the SNES' finest racing game, and if you're not familiar with its cutesy, psychedelic, cartoon graphics, bizarre short cuts and good, fast racing, then I'll enlighten you. Quite simply, Mario, his brother Luigi, Donkey Kong and other "stars" of *Mario* games (eight drivers in all), hack round a small circuit while firing bananas and tortoise shells at one another. The other main feature of this game is the superb two-player option, featuring split-screen action, and, of course, the chance to beat your mates. Sounds good? It is. But back to *SuperKarts*.

Instead of *Mario Kart's* cartoon-style graphics, *SuperKarts'* programmers have opted for quality graphics which give the game a more serious look. These graphics have the RT3D system to thank for their smooth movement. RT3D is similar to the SNES' Mode 7, which is extensively used in *Mario Kart*, and enables graphics to be moved fluidly in a detailed 3D environment. Despite the high detail, *SuperKarts* still runs quickly on a 386.

SuperKarts has been designed as a cross between *Mario Kart* and *Formula One Grand Prix*, and in both these games the best part isn't the podium finish, but beating your mates in the multi-player modes. All in all, this is a great fun game. It has all the thrills and spills of *Mario Kart* while retaining that PC feel about it. A benchmark for arcade driving games."

Here Are Four New Reasons to Try Epic Pinball Today.

Space Journey

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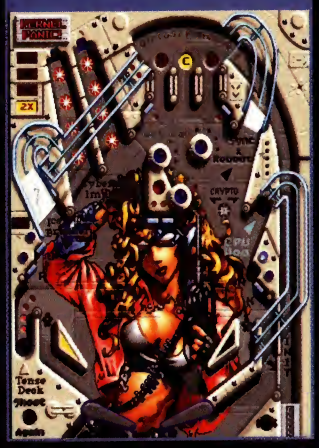

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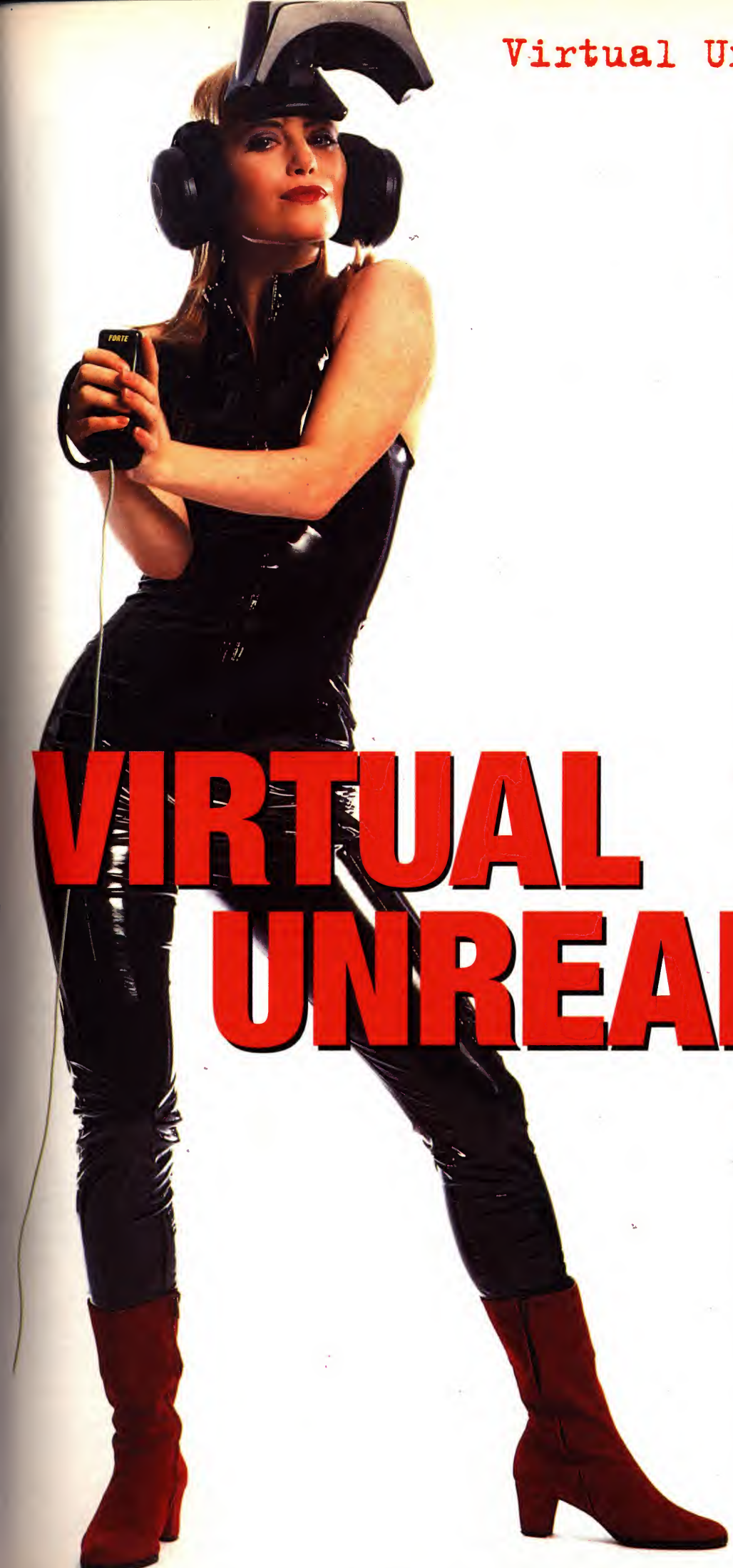


VIRTUAL UNREALITY?

Phil South takes a trip into virtual reality and attempts to find out if it knows what it's for yet.

VIRTUAL REALITY (VR) must be one of the most talked about and least understood of the recent techno buzzwords. Few people outside of the computer community really know what it's about, and still fewer actually use it on a regular basis. It's all to do with the yawning gap between real life and fiction. First, there was William Gibson's Cyberpunk literature, which sent everyone down a particular avenue, followed by a lot of crap wannabe cyberpunk novels, a couple of really good ones like Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash*, a lot of hype about brain machines and VR, and magazines like *Mondo 2000*, which, although promising, were more style than substance. This is actually a good description of VR in the late '80s and early '90s, all flash and bravado up front, and very little technology or product to back it up.

The next wave of the hype machine was *The Lawnmower Man*, the first VR movie, it sez'ere. This spawned a whole legion of nitwits who thought that VR was a mature technology and all they needed to do was put a coin in the slot of a Virtuality machine at the Trocadero to become Cyberjobe. Not!

That's the Cyber Hype. The Hype kept VR in the public eye for a longish time, and much was made of the possibilities of what it could do for the human mind, body and spirit. It was possible, they said, to indulge in CyberSex, that is to say, sex with someone else via modem link, using all-over body suits with tactile feedback. This again turned out to be little more than a lot more hype upon hype. Nice idea, but no real application, apart from a yuppie plaything.

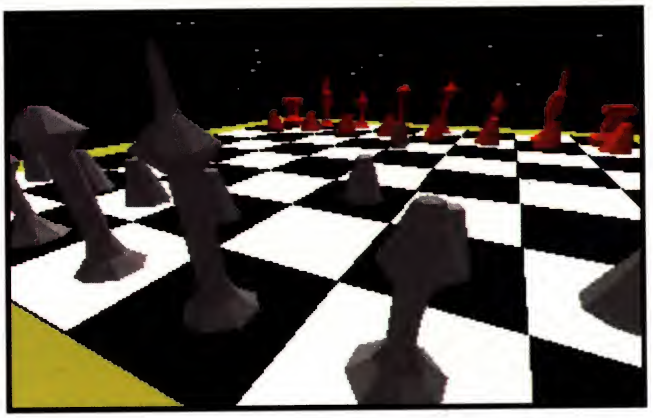
VR History

Initially, VR really was a technology waiting for an application. The premise of VR is that it allows you not only to see 3D graphics in true stereoscopic 3D, but it enables you to go inside a 3D environment and turn your head around, as you do in real life, and look at a room, for example, as if it were an actual room. The term Virtual Reality was coined, it is said, by VPL founder and early VR researcher Jaron Lanier, who didn't like the other descriptions of the science mooted by other people working in the field. VR like TV was not invented by any one person, it was an accretion of events and experiments throughout the 1970s to the present day, which we have only recently come to see as one thing.

The first immersive experiences came about from experiments in widescreen cinema, like Cinerama, where the audience is practically wrapped in the screen like a huge curved blanket. The field of vision is so wide that you almost can't see anything either side. (This, of course, inspired the most recent offshoot of this technology, IMAX, of which you can see a prime example of at the Bradford National Museum of Photography, Film and TV.) Obviously, the next step was

Photos: Tim Paton

Virtual Unreality?



the stereoscope, invented in the 1800s, and used to provide a 3D experience, of which the Viewmaster, on sale from the late 40s to the present day, is the most obvious example. Computers didn't really figure much until Douglas Englebart invented a mouse and pointer system, and Ivan Sutherland invented an elementary head-mounted display. VR was developed using a number of different systems, from simple LCD shutter glasses, conventional VGA monitors and joysticks, right up to full-scale 360-degree head-mount displays and data gloves, which transfer hand gestures into a 3D environment. All are designed to simulate a 3D space and allow you to walk freely through it, and look at it from any direction as if you were actually there.

Pros and Cons

Until comparatively recently, VR was to all intents and purposes an expensive computer toy with no software. But things are afoot in the current crop of market-ready devices to change all that. More of that in a minute. Some people still say that VR screws up your depth perception, due to the way it fools your eyes into thinking they can see over long distances, when in fact it's only focusing a few inches into the VR helmet. Tests are still being done on this, but you can bet that the new slew of home-based VR devices will carry health warnings. Oh, yes, where you are supposed to take regular breaks from the keyboard to prevent eyestrain and RSI, you are also supposed to take a break from your VR helmet every 30 minutes and focus on something distant just so the muscles in your eyes don't get all beaten out of shape.

Where are we now?

Although it was a really big thing for a while, at least in media hype terms, VR is now on the back burner as far as the mainstream is concerned, which is good for VR. Why? Well, because now the heat is off to produce something tangible, the VR boffins can take their time in order to get things right. The virtual reality gloves, so to speak, are off.

Now things are really starting to happen, especially now that items like the CyberMaxx headset are coming to market. This unit is high resolution, fully upgradable, costs just £399 and weighs in at only 1lb on your head. The closest competition weighs up to 3lb. Not only that, but VictorMaxx has signed agreements with over 55 companies who will be supporting the unit in upcoming software releases. But more of that in a minute.

What's crucial about all this is that in order to be a mass-market item, like a TV, video machine, video game or computer, the technology needs to be affordable.

That VR kit in full

A number of hot new VR products for the home are currently winging their way to our shores from the USA, and among these are some products designed for use with PCs in the home. Of course, you can do it yourself, with commonly found components, but it's far nicer to buy a great moulded plastic HMD and be the coolest gamer on your block.

Aura Interactor™ VR Vest

The Interactor Virtual Vest is one of the first VR products designed specifically for the video game industry, and it's essentially a way to add tactile feedback to your virtual reality experiences, even just to your *Doom* game-playing. The unit basically consists of a 30W amplifier and speakers which you strap to your chest, and which apply force to your ribcage in synch with the on-screen action. So when you get shot at you actually feel the impact, rather than just seeing it on-screen.

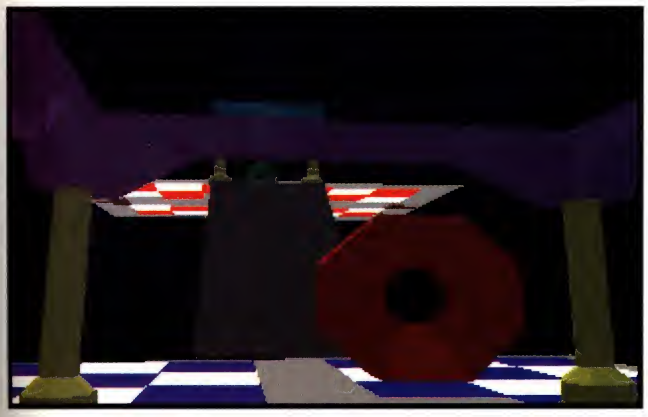
The device, like so much VR research, was born from technology developed by Aura for the military, and was actually used most recently by Aura in the "Theatre of Time" ride at the extraordinary Luxor Hotel complex in Las Vegas. It works by listening to the game's audio output and triggering a magnetic actuator within the vest, which in turn creates body pulsing vibrations which are directly linked to the game's action. Controls allow the user to alter the strength of the impact, from a light touch to an intense pounding. The unit can also filter out the music from games so you only get sound effect hits.

The effect is to give you more physical clues as to your status in the game. Obviously, it is easy to ignore bullet hits if you don't feel them, and you might not notice your life energy is draining away unless it's brought directly to your attention. Also your immersion in a game is much better if you feel like you are physically part of the action, rather than just a passive spectator. A side benefit is that you can put music through the vest and feel it in your chest, giving you a unique way to listen to music and feel it at the same time.

Contact: Aura Systems Inc. Tel: 010 1 (310) 643-5300 Fax: 010 1 (310) 643-8846. UK contact: No UK distribution at the time of going to press.

CyberMaxx

The CyberMaxx headset could be thought of as the first



major VR product capable of reaching the mass market, due in part to its amazing price, only £399, and what at least on paper sounds like an amazing specification. The device is light, has fast head-tracking technology, and weighs under 1lb on your head. It has stereo headphones, and twin active matrix 120,000 pixel LCD screens. Thanks to what VictorMaxx calls a "breakthrough in stereoscopic imaging", you simply plug'n'play with your regular VGA card. Software support has been sought and agreed by over 50 software houses, who have been plied with a free developers kit, to ensure that the CyberMaxx has some software which uses it. Around 12 games will be available by the Autumn this year.

Like most of the top of the range HMDs, the device features an adjustable interpupillary distance (the distance between your eyes, natch) and even has individual eye focus, just like binoculars. The field of view is around 62 degrees, which, according to ICE, is about the same as you get at the cinema. The freedom of movement allows 45 degrees up and down, and 360 degrees all around you, and yaw, pitch and roll orientation (see jargon box, page 40). System requirements are a 386 or above, standard VGA card and stereo soundcard. Obviously, the stereo sound is optional and the jack will plug into a mono one just as well. The unit will come with three items of software, a game, a pre-set world to explore, plus a world designer so you can get into the more serious side of VR.

Contact: ICE (0453) 756993

Forte VFX1

At the upper end of consumer VR we have the Forte VFX1, which is the unit you are used to seeing demoed on TV shows like *Tomorrow's World* and Saturday kids' shows. It's a more expensive item, retailing probably at around £699, and features a flip-up visor so you can keep the headset on and eat a sandwich while taking that all important break.

The heart of the unit is the twin active matrix LCDs which are 428x244, or containing 104,432 pixels each. The unit has built-in headphones, and works connected to its own 8-bit ISA card which plugs into your existing VGA card feature connector. It features a 46.4 degree angle of view horizontally, 35.3 degrees vertically. You can turn your head through 360 degrees (remember to turn your body too), and look up and down 70 degrees, with the usual yaw, pitch and roll orientation. The effect is supposed to be like watching a 35ft cinema screen. The unit also features eye distance adjustment (that interpupilary thang), and individual eye focusing. The minimum requirements are 386 or above, standard VGA card, and a stereo soundcard. For real 3D effects they recommend the Gravis Ultrasound card.

The spec is high, but then so is the price. The unit comes with the Cyberpuck, a 3D pointer, usually costing $200. The developers kit costs $2,600 including VFX1, Cyberpuck, PC card, software, and documentation.

Contact: Zye Technology (0293) 538666

Logitech Cyberman

The first real 3D pointing device to make it to the mass market is the Cyberman, which coincidentally is also the first 3D pointing device to be supported by any software. Of course, very few of these pieces of software are 3D per se, but that will come.

The unit also provides tactile feedback, as a little buzzer in the unit vibrates the mouse when you are shot at or hit a wall, etc. The

☞

DIY VR

Although you can spend a lot of time and money on VR, it is possible to do some serious VR exploration with minimal amounts of folding green, but only if you replace that dosh with a lot of hard elbow work. The book *Garage Virtual Reality* by Linda Jacobson describes methods and systems by which you can design and create virtual worlds, and also how to create the hardware you need to complete the full VR experience, like data gloves and head mount displays.

The book goes into some detail about how this can be done, and even goes so far as to provide plans for an albeit clunky and odd-looking VR headset that you can build at home. Although undoubtedly very useful, it only works with a couple of pieces of PD software, and is really only a toy for hackers who know C, and have a degree in electronics. But if VR hacking is how you'd like to spend the rest of your life, this is the only one-stop shop for all the data and technical specs you need. It contains some very invaluable sources of Mattel PowerGloves, shutter specs and other useful hard and software for the well-to-do VR hacker about (virtual) town. It is also one of the most readable books about VR, lacking the popular wide-eyed slobbering of most other VR books, whose authors don't generally seem to know as much about the subject as Ms Jacobson.

The most important programs to get hold of if you want to do some real VR hacking are Rend386, and the newer versions of the program, Avril and VR386. All of these are available on the Internet.

VR on the Internet

A more vibrant community of VR DIY enthusiasts exists on the Internet at some specific sites around the globe, mostly in the USA it has to be said, and on the Usenet conference <sci.virtual-worlds>. There is a lot of chit-chat about VR research and 3D rendering engines, plus a lot of info on the favourite DIY VR tools, a PD program called Rend386, the old Nintendo PowerGlove, and the Sega 3D glasses.

Articles of interest can be downloaded from the following sites by anonymous FTP:

<ftp.u.washington.edu> Directory path:
/public/virtual-worlds.

<sunee.uwaterloo.ca> Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: University of Waterloo. Site contains freeware REND386 in freeware VR:
Directory path: /pub/rend386.

FTP site at <avalon.chinalake.navy.mil> This site is now mirrored on <ftp.kpc.com> in:
Directory path: /pub/mirror/avalon.
The Avalon site was created to be *the* Internet 3D object repository.

FTP site at <sunsite.unc.edu> This is an "information gather's heaven" site, on:
Directory path: /pub/academic/computer-science/virtual-reality
The directory contains VR demos, partial mirror of sci.virtual-worlds and glove-list, papers, articles, and much, much more.

FTP site at <src.doc.ic.ac.uk> Site contains Usenet archives from sci.virtual-worlds and comp.sys.isis.
Directory paths: /usenet/comp.archives/auto/comp.sys.isis
/usenet/comp.archives/auto/sci.virtual-worlds

FTP site at <wuarchive.wustl.edu> This site is a complete mirror of the Usenet group <sci.virtual-worlds>. There is also a graphics archive with graphics-related information and source in:
Directory path: /graphics.

Note: Bear in mind when you access American sites that it's easier to get in before 3pm when most of America starts waking up, and after about 5-6pm it's almost impossible to get into popular sites like wuarchive.

Further Reading

There are basically only two books you need to read if you're really serious about VR. *Virtual Reality: Through the New Looking Glass* by Ken Pimentel and Kevin Teixeira (Intel/Windcrest/McGraw Hill, ISBN 0-8306-4064-9) is a fascinating history of the medium and covers a lot of very complex technical ground very readably and easily. And, of course, the ultimate VR hacker's guide, *Garage Virtual Reality: The affordable Way to Explore Virtual Worlds* by Linda Jacobson, Sams Publishing, ISBN 0-672-30270-5 is everything you ever wanted to know about pioneering VR hackers and how they did it, plus plans and software to help you do the same. The book comes with a disk of C source code, some demos of famous VR software like VistaPro 3, and a full copy of Domark's Virtual Reality Studio to help you on your way into the unknown.

VR Jargon Buster

...Or how to bluff your way in VR.

•Artificial Reality
Phrase used by VR pioneer Myron Krueger to describe his "computer-controlled responsive environments". Not as catchy as VR, but moving in the right direction.

•Cybernetics
Phrase coined by Norbert Wiener in 1948 to describe the study of the operations of computer systems and the human nervous system. Origin of all these silly Cyber words. Like...

•Cyberspace
Popularised by William Gibson in 1984 for his book *Neuromancer* to describe a fictional shared virtual environment comprised of data that is visualised, heard and touched. Even William Gibson is sick of hearing the phrase used.

•DataGlove
A gesture recognition device invented by VPL Research. The technology was later incorporated into the Mattel PowerGlove for the Nintendo Entertainment System. (Ptui!)

•Environment
In VR a 3D model which can be experienced from the inside.

•Forceball
A 6DOF (six directions of force) input device that enables six directions of movement to be created from a simple pointing device. The Logitech Cyberman is a type of forceball.

•HMD
Acronym for Head Mount Display. Not as some might think, Hold My Dome.

•Immersion
Characteristic of a computer-mediated experience that allows inclusion or partial immersion in a virtual world.

•Multiplex
The ability to transmit two or more signals simultaneously.

•Pitch
Forward and backward rocking motion.

•Position Tracker
A device which senses movements in the body and transmits the movement and orientation to a computer for processing.

•PowerGlove
A development of the VPL DataGlove which made it to the market for the Nintendo game system. Now used by PC hackers as a VR input device. Not a glove you plug into the mains.

•Roll
Rotation.

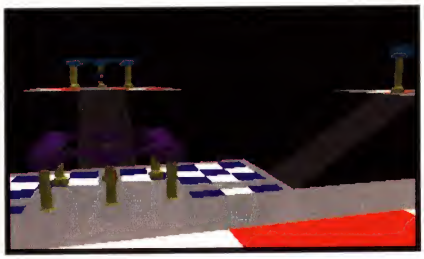
•Shutter Glasses
Glasses with LCD lenses which can be electronically switched on or off very rapidly for viewing computer-controlled 3D images on a single computer monitor.

•Six Degrees of Freedom/Force (6DOF)
A sensor or input device capable of tracking a range of 3D movement, spatial position (x, y and z) and orientation (yaw, pitch and roll)... actually, I feel a bit sick.

•Tactile Feedback
Output devices which transmit force to provide a VR participant with a sense of touch in a virtual world. Oo-er.

•Virtual Reality
Technology that presents data visualisations in the form of computer-generated 3D environments that you can 'enter' and navigate within. Virtual reality, contrary to popular belief, is not cyberspace. Anyone who says so is a dork.

•Yaw
Panning from side to side.



software which comes with the device includes *Doom*, *Terminator Rampage*, *The Body Adventure*, *Shadow Caster*, and just recently a special edition of *MegaRace*.

Logitech developed a 3D mouse with special motion trackers and other devices, but this wasn't a retail item, merely a research tool. In fact the company transferred very little of the technology from that 3D pointer into the Cyberman, which is actually a sort of forceball with a mouse on top of it. The unit would be very useful in a 3D environment, but it makes for a very peculiar mouse. Because it moves in so many directions you really need to practise with it, and as it slides along on its base, it doesn't move like a conventional mouse. You can use it with Windows, but I wouldn't recommend it.

Contact: Logitech (0344) 891313

Various technologies and components go to make up a VR system. The idea is to simulate a 3D space through which you can walk and with which you can physically interact as if the space existed and you were really there.

And Finally...

Unfortunately, despite the fact that VR is actually very entertaining to play with and opens up some very interesting possibilities, the technology does not yet exist for everyone to own a headset and the games which work with VR systems are not there yet. It may still turn out to have no real appeal as a mass-market control device for gaming, be consigned to the 'blind alley' bin as a tool for architects and town planners to play with, and have no life after the hype has really died down. But certain firms refuse to allow VR to lie down and play dead, and it may still rise again as a popular medium. In the meantime, we can only speculate about the possible futures of VR.

There are the developers, for example. Are they going to support it? Simulation giant Bullfrog says yes, it will be supporting Forte VFX1 in future products, although it says it will initially only be adapting products like Magic Carpet to work with the device, rather than coding special 3D versions or special VR games. Games like *Doom* seem to find their way onto VR kit by way of a demo, and it is said that iD will be supporting VR gear in some way in future releases.

Once the software support war has died down a little perhaps we will see products having the option of using any of the prevailing VR devices for input to the games out there. Until then, it's very much a case of wait and see.

She might look like she works for the Ministry of Silly Walks, but this is VR in action. Honest!

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No other 3-D American football game can touch this action. In-your-facemask graphics, bone-crunching tackles and sensational catches. But watch your back! The best of the 1994 NFL teams will be gunning for you.

Be there! With close-up 3-D action through unlimited camera angles and the true-to-life sounds of a frantic crowd. In this game you'll visit real NFL fields and stadiums and use actual NFL team uniforms and logos for your team. It's complete!

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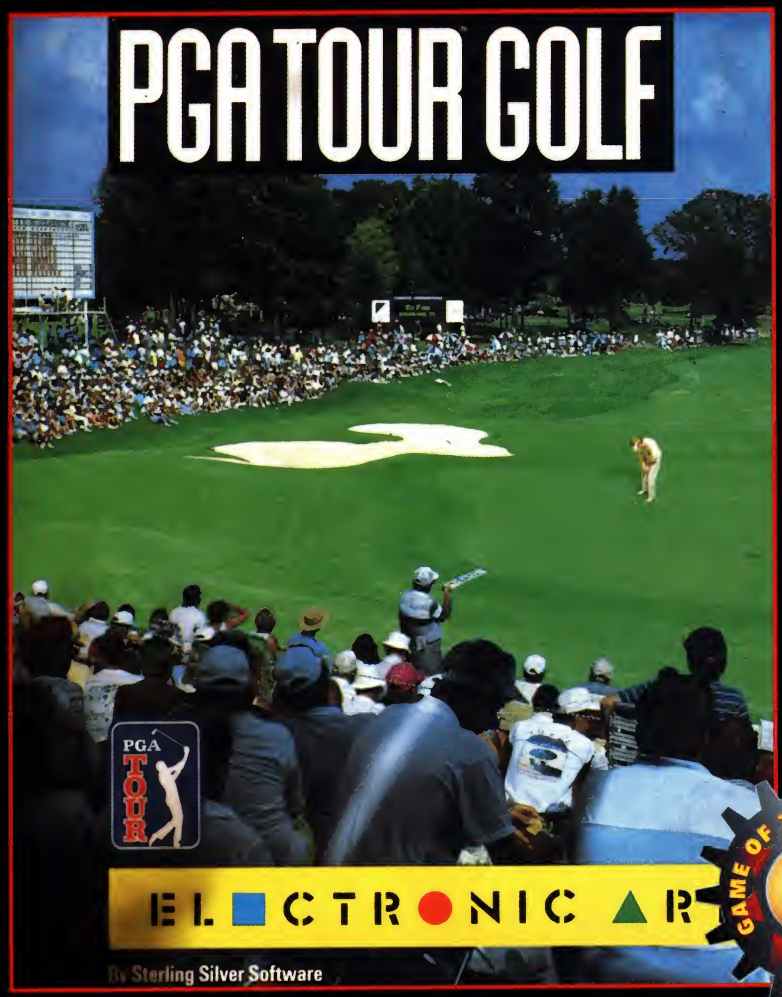

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GAME OF THE MONTH

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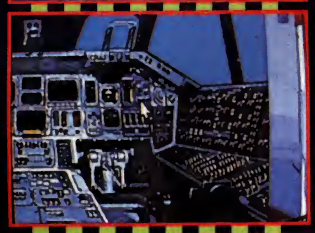
PGA TOUR GOLF



REACH FOR THE SKIES

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Everyone remembers where they were when they first experienced viewing the powerful image of a rocket being launched into space.

Now, soaring at 17,000 miles per hour, 280 nautical miles above the earth, SHUTTLE enables you to fly numerous realistic missions in the Space Shuttle Orbiter. Based on official government documents, SHUTTLE is the most accurate and comprehensive simulation of NASA's Space Shuttle ever produced for any home computer.

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"Incredibly detailed... in a class of its own" - PC REVIEW

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THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN.

Summer 1940. The future of World War II hangs in the balance. The cream of the German Luftwaffe and the aces of the RAF are locking horns in their most crucial confrontation yet - The Battle of Britain.

Over 50 years on, you have the chance to re-live that famous battle and play the part of a British pilot or a German flying ace. Your performance determines whether the outcome is a repeat of the British victory or an unprecendented German success.

* Re-live the crucial days of the battle as controller, pilot or gunner.

"the combat is exhilarating" - PC REVIEW

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PC ZONE

reviews

Games reviews is what *PC Zone* is all about and this is where the reviews start. On the next 36 pages you'll find reviews of all the latest disk-based software. However, before you launch yourself into the most authoritative reviews pages around you might like to check up on what it all means.

ALL GAMES receive an overall mark out of 100. So, by definition that's a percentage, but if you want to call it "Out of a hundred" then you go ahead and call it "Out of a hundred". As a rough guide to interpreting the scores here's the guidelines we give to reviewers. (Not that they ever read them mind you. It can be quite heartbreaking at times....)

90+ (PC Zone Classic) Highly original idea or an exceptional, near "definitive" version of an old idea. Flawless in all departments and crammed to overflowing with long-term playability. Alternatively, the software company took the reviewer to Paris for the weekend.

80–89 (PC Zone Recommended) Extremely well executed and strong in all/all but one department. High degree of originality.

70–79 Strong idea and well executed, but not necessarily very original. Weaknesses do not seriously impair playability, and it has a reasonably long life.

60–69 Games falling into the "If you like this style of game you'll like this, if not you won't" category.

50–59 Seen it all before, take it or leave it. Nothing special to recommend it but not abysmal either.

40–49 Dodgy. Still playable but probably only the once.

30–39 Seriously weak in idea and execution.

20–29 The game is hopeless or the software company forgot the 'go' cash bribe.

10–19 Bin jobs.

0–9 It didn't work. It crashed the PC and got jammed in the disk drive.

Is there anything worse than buying a game only to find it's not compatible with your machine? Yes, lots of things. Still it is a pain (and a waste of money) so check out the Specs box for a guideline to what memory, graphic and sound support you will need (or can use) with each game. However, please note that this is only a guideline – you should also check the packaging or confirm information with the retailer or software company.

Finally, the In Perspective box. Often, all that a review is saying is that a game is as good as that one but not quite as good as the other one. In Perspective attempts to illustrate this visually by rating the game in terms of other similar products. The "scores" given in this graph are relative to each other i.e. all examples might score highly in their own right but not against each other. ☞

WHAT'S ON OUR HARD DISK?

Some games get installed, reviewed and then deleted. Others hang around a lot longer. This is what's currently nestling on our hard drive. Not necessarily the best games around, but the ones we keep coming back to.

- TIE Fighter
- Indycar Racing
- World Cup USA '94
- Doom
- UFO

WING COMMAN

John Davison tries to work out why we're getting yet another *Wing Commander* game two months before *Wing Commander 3* is launched. Are EA/Origin trying to wing it?

(Above) Battle mode is probably best described as a game of intergalactic chicken.

To say that *Wing Commander* was a bit of a turning point in 3D space shooty games would be an understatement of near galactic proportions. Not only did it manage to be a jolly super game that was lots of fun and all that... it also started a trend in PC games development which has driven the market for the past couple of years. Back in the olden days, before Chris Roberts and his merry band lashed *Wing Commander* together, everyone was quite happy to trundle along with their trusty 286 PC with virtually no memory and crap graphics. Then along comes this spanking new game and all of a sudden everyone needs a bloody great ninja PC with all the trimmings.

(Above) The split-screen mode is actually very fast indeed and the graphics update just as quickly as they do in full-screen mode.

In Campaign mode, the package is transformed into a very respectable strategy sim.

Several years on and the game has now spawned a host of sequels and supplement disks, and is about to thrust into its third mighty incarnation as *Wing Commander 3: Heart of the Tiger* (which I'll mention later). Before all this happens, though, we find this... a game set to hit the shops a couple of months before the next 'biggie' but quietly managing to break a bit of new ground along the way.

Significantly different from the last *Wing Commander* thing to be launched, namely the bloody awful *Wing Commander Academy*, *Armada* is actually quite a bit of a major

(Above) God bless reinforcements. If you kill off a pilot all you need to do is call for a replacement from the carrier vessel.

(Above) The attention to detail is actually rather smart. When you hit a ship you see a transparent polygon thingy appear to represent its shield.

DER: ARMADA

product on the quiet. Not only is it the first of Origin's space blast 'em products to make use of the advanced Realspace 3D graphics engine, but it also features multi-player network and modem support, a fancy split-screen two-player thing and a relatively simple strategy game. On top of that, it also takes a leaf out of LucasArts' book and allows you to play the bad guys as well the angelic Terran Confederation peeps.

Intergalactic Chicken

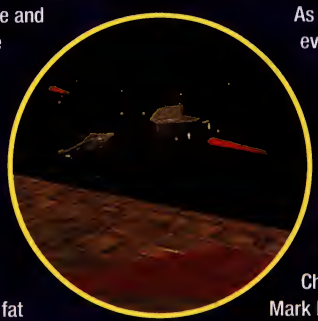
At its basic level, *Armada* is a totally bastardised version of the original *Wing Commander*. Gone are the tedious symmetrically faced goons that make up the 'interactive movie' sections (thank God) and in their place we now have a much wider variety of gameplay options. Split into several different modes, it accommodates a number of play styles, both single player and multi-player, which range from a sort of scaled-down *Master of Orion*-style galactic domination campaign to simple one-on-one dogfights.

Battle mode is the absolute bog-standard version and simply allows you to choose one of ten ships from a menu of both Terran Confederation and Kilrathi Empire vessels. This mode is pretty much what you'd expect from the name. Two ships hurtle towards each other with guns blazing in a bizarre game of intergalactic

WHAT'S NEXT? *WING COMMANDER 3: HEART OF THE TIGER*

Set for release this November (although if Origin release dates are anything to go by it's best to take this with a pinch of salt) is the third fully-fledged game in the *Wing Commander* series. Dubbed as the first 'true' interactive movie, the product is a CD-ROM only based product which features more innovative and impossibly ambitious features than any game we've ever come across.

Boasting a production bill in excess of $4 million the product not only sports the very latest version of the RealSpace 3D graphics engine with full SVGA support, but it also includes more than an hour of full-screen FMV (full-motion video) footage. Playing in this 'digital movie' we have the big star of the show, Mark 'Luke Skywalker' Hamill, along with John Rhys-Davies (the big fat bloke out of the Indiana Jones movies), Malcolm McDowell, the bloke who played Biff in the *Back to the Future* films, top bonky-bonky-film star Ginger Lynn Allen and a host of others who all seem to have spent an awful lot of time appearing in naff US sitcoms and trundling around the stand-up comedy circuit in America.

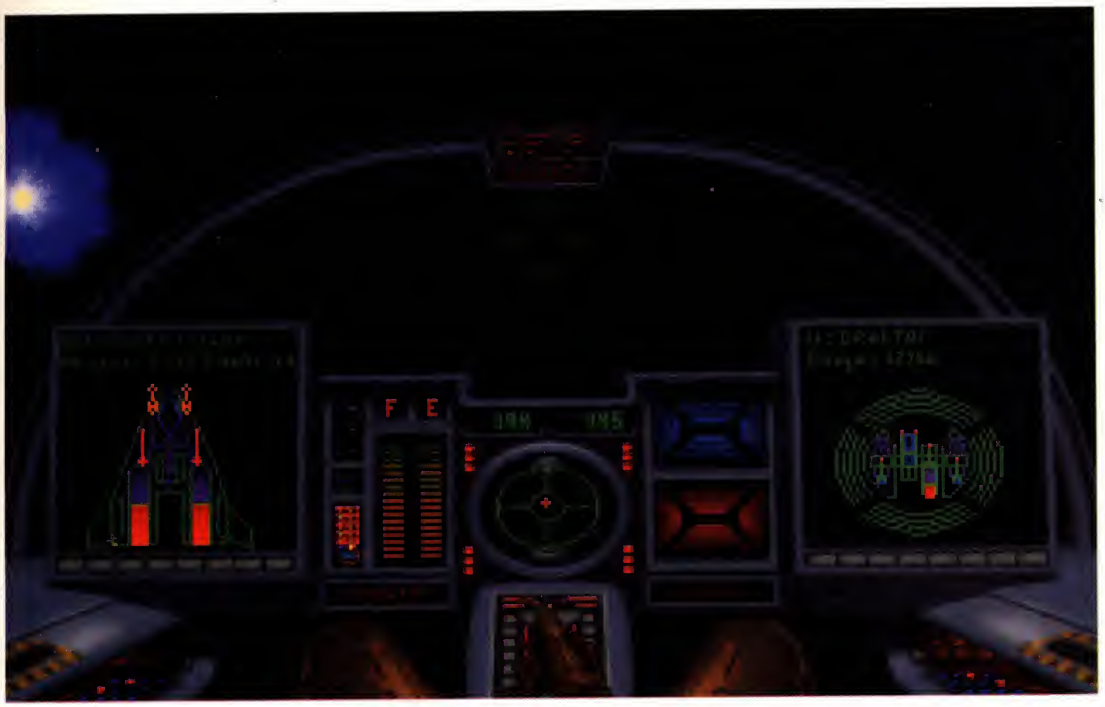


Set a number of years after *Wing Commander II* in the year 2654, the game tells of the Terran Confederation in a desperate situation. The Kilrathi Empire now has a stranglehold on much of the galaxy and the Earth is under threat. What a totally staggering surprise. Shocked? I was.

As the Terran government plan a mass evacuation of the entire population, the Confederation hatches a plan to unleash a devastating weapon on the Kilrathi homeworld. The detonation of this powerful planet-smashing weapon, known as the Behemoth, could well end the war forever, but a traitor has leaked plans to the Kilrathi High Command and now the whole of humanity is in jeopardy. Your job as Colonel Christopher Blair (played by Luke Skyw...er, Mark Hamill) is to find the traitor and ultimately defeat the Kilrathi Empire.

From what we've seen of the game so far it looks utterly gob-smacking, and despite the fact that you'll need a DX2 with a shit-hot graphics card at the absolute minimum to get the most out of the thing, it could well end up being a turning point in PC games production.

Wing Commander: Armada



☞ chicken. Both players (yourself and either the computer or another pilot) have unlimited combat resources and the winner is basically the person left in one piece at the end of the scrap. It's a particularly uninspiring game and although a bit of a laugh at first it soon becomes stupendously boring. Never mind, though, there's more interesting stuff knocking around.

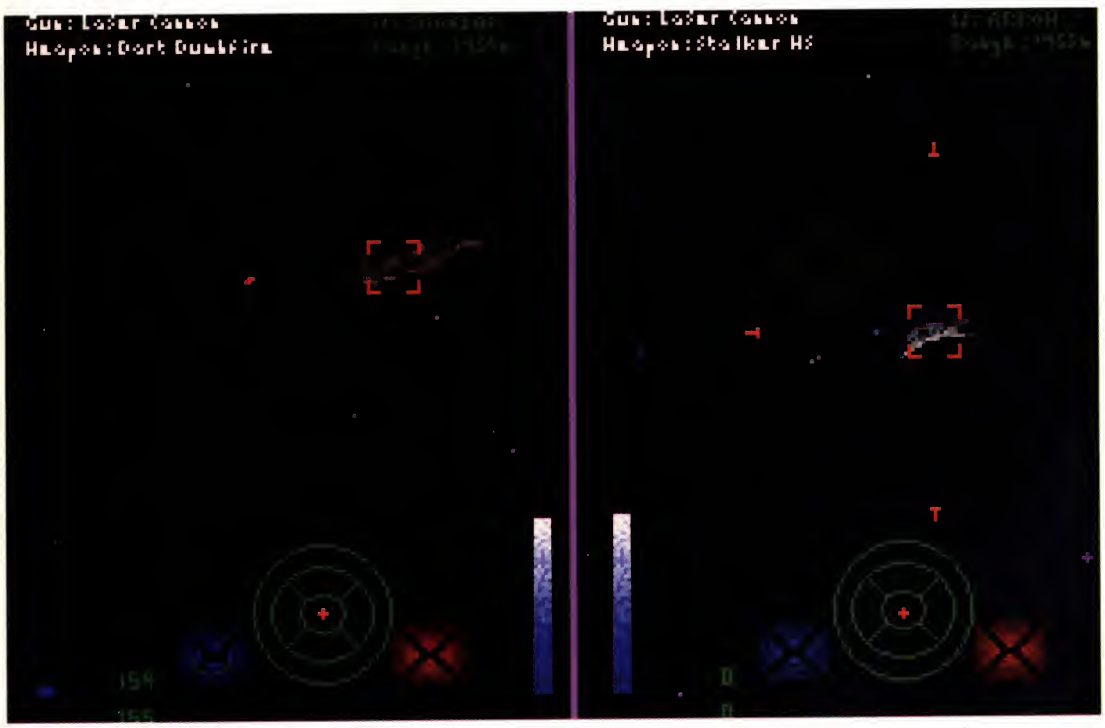
The second play option is referred to as Armada and is described in the manual as "a strategy-based conquer the sector game", which pretty much sums it up. You are placed in control of a vast carrier ship with a huge range of resources available and your job is simply to move around a sector of space wiping out bad guys and plundering planets for their resources as you hop from planet to planet. The control of this mode is very much like a seriously stripped-down version of either *Starlord* or *Master of Orion* and is actually very easy to control. Your view of the proceedings is via a very simplified galactic map which gradually opens up as you move around the sector. As you reach each planet, you have opportunities to set up mining colonies and manufacturing facilities, and the eventual aim is to control such a vast proportion of the sector that the enemy force doesn't have a hope in hell of coming anywhere near you. Should you make contact with any enemy forces, the game automatically jumps into battle mode where you have full control over the combat situation.

It's at this point that one of the major differences between *Wing Commander: Armada* and any of its predecessors becomes glaringly apparent. In pretty much every other game in the series you have been placed in control of an individual personality whose career you develop through the course of the game. Here things are very much different as you are actually the overall commanding officer type who gets to shout at people and boss everyone around. Should a pilot get killed he is simply replaced by another from the resources found on the carrier ship. Dead pilots are simply replaced until you have absolutely no one left.

(Above Right) Exploiting planetary resources is very important. You need to mine the planets to get the raw materials which will enable you to build new ships.

(Right) The rotating 3D camera view is particularly useless – but it's dead impressive to look at and lets you view your ship from any angle.

(Below Left) The Battle mode is only really any fun if you're linked up or in two-player mode. I swear the computer player normally cheats.



While I'm on the subject of major differences between this and other WC games, it's also worth mentioning that whilst playing the strategic bits you don't necessarily have to fly the combat missions yourself. Should you so desire you can tell the computer to calculate all the odds and simply speculate on the result of combat without you actually having to go through the ordeal of flying around and shooting things. Given the overall nature of the *Wing Commander* theme I would have to say that this is a distinctly odd idea which seems to go against the whole concept of the series. Still, I'm sure some people might appreciate it.

Where the Armada mode really comes into its own is when you play it as a multi-player game. Players can either team up together to have a bash at crushing the enemy, or alternatively you can opt to have

a crack at each other. The simplicity of the game engine, coupled with the turn-based nature of the strategy element, makes this an ideal link-up game, but to be honest I was amazed at just how effective it is as a two-player game played on a single machine. All the strategy bits are played in turns, whilst any combat is presented through a split-screen set-up which is remarkably effective.

While I'm having a bit of a ramble about the multi-player support I do feel that I have to say that this is certainly a damned friendly game when it comes to comms and network support. Modem and null modem support are presented by means of a very friendly graphical menu screen and networking is presented in a similar manner. As long as you have your own netBIOS sitting in memory before you load the game you shouldn't have any trouble getting a bunch of machines linked up.

If I could find any problems at all it would have to be that there is a bit of slowdown every now and then when you're playing the game on a modem link. It's not

IN PERSPECTIVE

Lots of good ideas and some really smart graphics, but the LucasArts games are still the best.

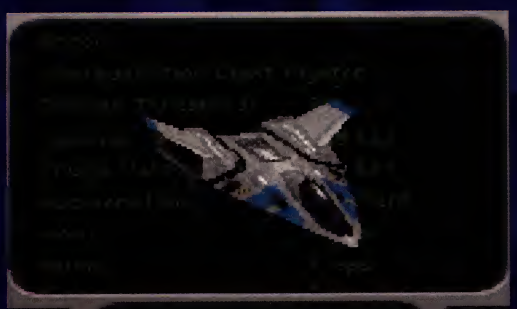
TIE Fighter

X-Wing

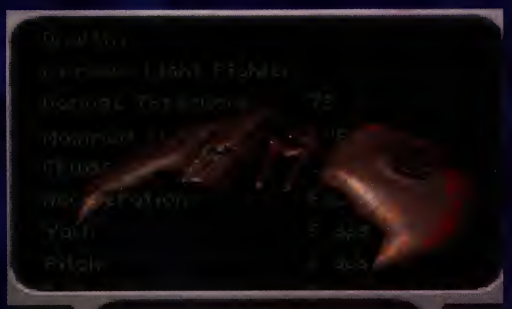
Wing Armada

Wing Commander

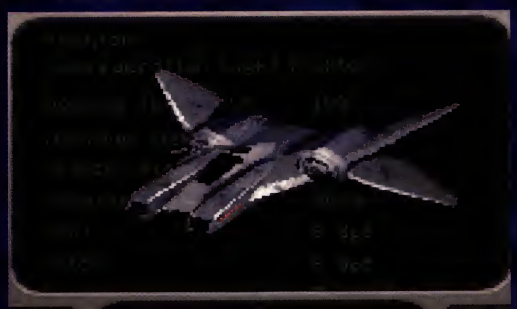
Spacecraft spotter's corner



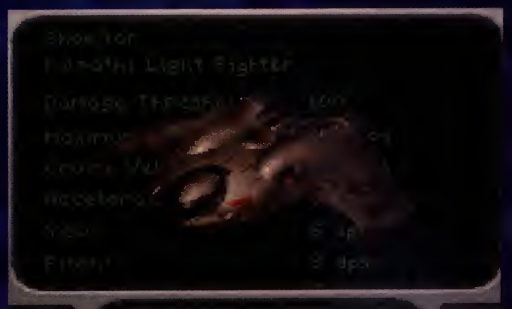
Arrow: Terran Confederation



Dralthi: Kilrathi Empire

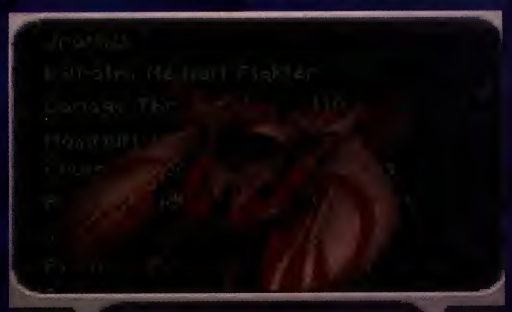


Phantom: Terran Confederation

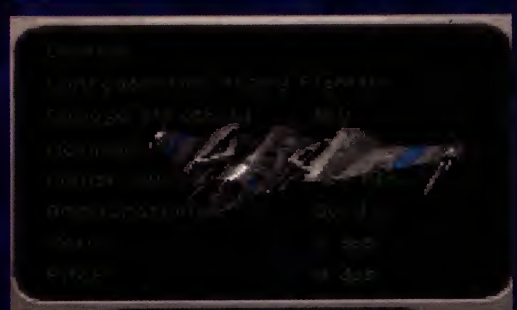


Shok'Lar: Kilrathi Empire

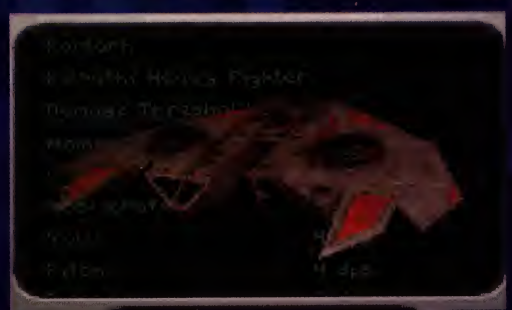
Wraith: Terran Confederation



J'rathek: Kilrathi Empire



Gladius: Terran Confederation

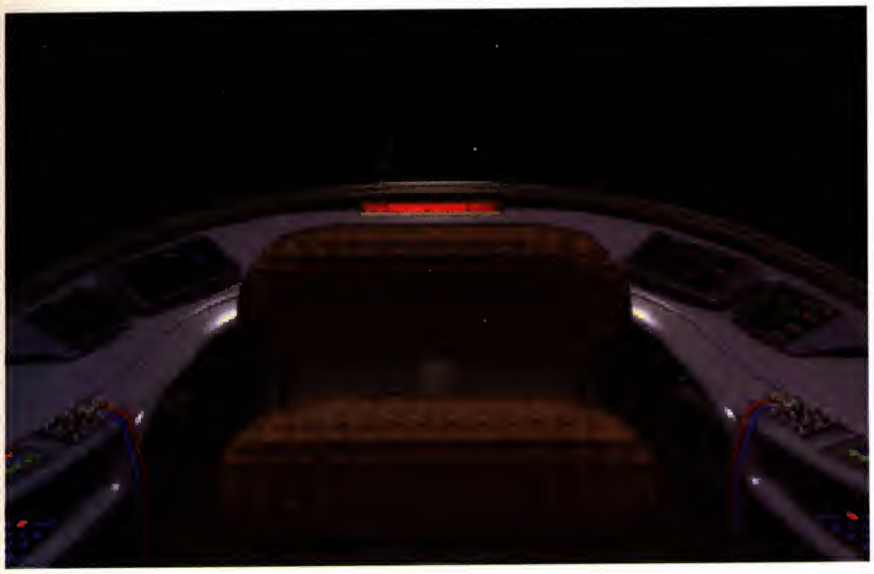


Kor'larh: Kilrathi Empire

Banshee: Terran Confederation

Goran: Kilrathi Empire

Wing Commander: Armada



(Left) All the views look smart now, not just the one out of the front window.

76 SCORE

Lots of good ideas stuck together but it doesn't quite hang right.

Minimum Memory: 4Mb
Minimum Processor: 386
Hard Disk Space Required: 5Mb
Graphics Modes Supported: VGA
Sound Cards Supported: All major sound cards
Controls: Joystick, keyboard
Comments: The multi-player options are absolutely superb and it'll certainly make a change to see this appearing on networks rather than just *Doom* all of the time.

Price: £44.99 **Release Date:** September
Pub: Electronic Arts/Origin **Tel:** 0753 549442

shatteringly godawful, but it is still noticeable.

The final mode of the game is known as Campaign and is basically very similar to Armada but consists of a large number of sectors which we're reliably informed contain more than 2,000 worlds for you to plunder. To be honest, although the strategy game engine itself is only very simple, when you play the game in Campaign mode it transforms the whole package into something which is actually a very respectable strategy sim.

Bitmapped Polygon Thing

Aside from the fact that there is a variety of play options, the most noticeable new feature in *Armada* is that the graphics have been enhanced enormously. Gone are the naff sprite-based bitmapped graphics and in their place we now have some dead impressive looking texture-mapped polygon spacecraft with all the relevant bells and whistles. We're informed by sources at EA that the 3D model for this is actually an extremely early version of that developed for *Wing Commander 3*. If you think that this looks impressive, imagine what it could look like with twice the number of polygons and at double the resolution. Pant-wettingly smart I'm sure you'll agree... and no doubt wallet-cripplingly power-hungry on the old CPU.

Unlike any other games in the *Wing Commander* series, the graphics engine here is pretty much a glorified flight simulator engine and because of the way everything is presented it means that we can now get all sorts of fancy external views and spinning, fly-by cinematic type bits that could quite possibly make you go "ooh" for at least the first few minutes that you're playing the game. If you've come across RealSpace before (in *Strike Commander* or *Pacific Strike*) you'll know pretty much what to expect... impressive-looking graphics that look gorgeous but require absolute shitloads of processor power to shift around. OK, this might not be as demanding as *Strike* was but you still really need a 486 PC to get the most out of the thing.

Funnily enough, it's not just the 3D engine which has been enhanced on the presentation front. The whole caboodle has been totally spruced up. The cockpits in all ten ships are considerably better than anything found in previous Origin titles and to be honest they bear an uncanny resemblance to the those found in the recently released 3DO version of *Wing Commander*. Gone are the bright and garish colours and the almost cartoon-like representations and in their place we now have some far more realistic looking cockpits with lots of spinning flashy looking bits and utterly useless bits of instrumentation. Smart. Jump into a Kilrathi ship and you even find that you've developed an awful manicure problem when you look at the now obligatory moving hand in the centre of the cockpit.

(Above) The chase camera view is one of those things that's not particularly useful, but is always great to fiddle with when there's nothing going on in the game.

(Left) Being able to switch off the cockpit graphics is bloody useful and gives a much more convincing 3D view.

(Below) The graphics for all the cockpits now look much smarter than they did in the previous *Wing Commander* games.

For the pure combat freaks out there, though, you'll be pleased to find that the entire cockpit representation can be removed just like in both *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter* and you can experience a full-screen 3D affair with only the bare minimum of instruments present on screen.

It's Not Crap

To be honest I was really surprised by this, mainly because it had an enormous amount of potential to be totally and utterly shite. The last 'in-betweeny' game in the series, *Wing Commander Academy*, was really quite terrifyingly awful and when I first heard about this I was expecting something along similar lines. Fortunately, it seems that the Origin team had a mass brainstorming session and dumped all sorts of excellent ideas together into a marketable product. There are a lot of good features here... the only problem is that it doesn't really hang together as well as something like *TIE Fighter*. The link-up feature, the new graphics engine, the strategy element these are all really great features and I'm sure when they're transferred to the new full-blown game in the series they will add to the overall quality of that product. I'm not sure if you know what I'm really trying to get at here. I guess it's just that this product seems to be more of a dumping ground for good ideas than a game that has been really thought out and actually 'designed'.

As it stands, *Armada* is a good quality product but is really only going to appeal to those of you who really love Chris Roberts games and can't wait to get your hands on his latest little bit of production wizardry. On the other hand, any of you out there who care to indulge in multi-player games on a regular basis, the PC 'swingers', you lot will love it. If you've got *Doom* ensconced on your network but now feel an urge to beat your workmates up in a different way, you could do far worse than invest in a copy of this. ZZ

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(Above) Heimdall discovers his long lost cousin, Norman No-mates.
(Other pics on this page) The graphics are pretty good, but don't exactly exude atmostphere. This is not a game for diehard RPG fans.

HEIMDALL 2

"I'm dull too" punned Paul Lakin rather weakly, seeking to explain why he should review Core's latest venture into the world of Norse mythology.

Oh shit! It's Timmy Mallet! — Meet Heimdall – a hammer swinging, helmet-headed hippy with a bad attitude and a rather large hammer.

IF NOTHING else, you probably remember the axe throwing arcade section from the original *Heimdall*. It attracted quite a lot of attention, and even got the mighty Dominic Diamond into trouble on Gamesmaster. The rest of the game was quite good too – a sort of adventure with a strong arcade element and plenty of puzzles concerning Heimdall's quest for the god's armoury that had been pinched and scattered all over the shop. *Heimdall* was so well received that the only real puzzle was how long before the sequel came out. The answer is this long, 'cos here it is.

Once more, Heimdall has to return to the land of the mortals, following in the footsteps of the unlucky (and now unliving) Baldur. His quest is to retrieve the four pieces of a powerful amulet that Odin needs to defeat Loki. These pieces have been scattered throughout the different worlds, which can only be entered from the Hall of Worlds. Of course, the "keys" to these worlds have also been scattered, so Heimdall has to retrieve them first.

Core are to be sincerely congratulated on managing to use the same scenario twice in one game.

Ride of the Valkyries

Since Baldur made such a pigs ear out of his attempt at the quest, the gods have decided that Heimdall probably needs a bit of help. Therefore, he gets landed with Ursha, a Valkyrie. You can swap between the two characters whenever you like.

The Valkyries are the pall bearers of the gods, so Ursha's bound to be a cheery soul with a great line in sick jokes. This being a computer game she also has the sort of gravity defying chest that would make Dolly Parton weep and she seems somewhat under-dressed for the weather. I don't know, maybe gods don't get colds.

The doors of perception

At the beginning of the game you're in a room (well, more of an astral plane really, I've just got no sense of imagination) leading off from which are a number of doors. Each of these doors leads you into another world. At the beginning of the game you can only access one world, so you need to find the keys to the other doors as well as the pieces of amulet.

Once in a world you may travel to its various islands by boat (controlled on a map screen). On the islands there's the usual mix of bods either trying to kill you, interest you in the whereabouts of their sister or sell you a moth-eaten piece of chain mail. What you're looking for is the Ro'Geld. Each world has one, and it's a hot tip for the location of a piece of amulet. Of course, you're endlessly being diverted into sub quests – the kidnap rate in these worlds would keep the tabloids busy for years.

In the eye of the beholder

Most of the game is viewed from a 3D-isometric viewpoint and the graphics are

(This page) Heimdall seems to have two left feet a lot of the time and has difficulty moving around objects. You'll need pixel-perfect accuracy to get him to walk through doors etc., and it's a nightmare to stop him walking once he's started moving.

IN PERSPECTIVE

The superb *Cadaver* is less action orientated, while *Worlds of Legend* is more like an RPG.

Heimdall

Worlds Of Legend

Cadaver

Heimdall 2

on the pretty good side of Okay. Sprites are quite large and reasonably well animated. The actual style of the drawing is cartoony in a bande dessine kind of way. Does that sound horribly poncey? Yes. Well what I mean is they're cartoony but not cartoony as in Disney or even *Master of the Universe*. Hell, why am I bothering to explain, you only have to look at the screen grabs. The point is that, although the graphics are good they're not atmospheric. They place the game very much in the world of the light-hearted romp. This, of course, need not be a bad thing, but heavily-bearded RPG types might be disappointed. Not that *Heimdall 2* is, or even pretends to be an RPG. The character interaction is fairly notional. The only element that is quite strong is the magic. Spells are created by mixing together different rune stones and can be bought or discovered by trial and error. (In my case it was more error than trial). However, I'm really just stalling for time here, trying to put off the evil moment, but there's no getting away from it.

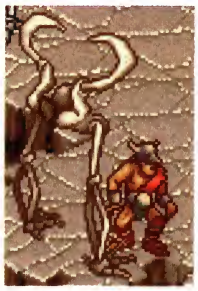
Thin line between love and hate

It's a long time since I've been quite so wound up by a game as I was by *Heimdall 2*. The ideas and the graphics are both of the good, if not stunningly original category. But the gameplay? Hanging's too good for it, I tell you. I don't know where to begin in my list of faults, so I suppose I'll start with the worst. The control system would have had me tearing my hair out, if I'd had any left to tear. Supposedly, the character can be controlled by keyboard or mouse. Well, the mouse is a waste of time for starters; sometimes the character moves to where you click, but more often he/she doesn't. Whether they move or not seems to be determined entirely by luck. When you use the keyboard it's like trying to lead a drunkard through a maze. For a one-time god, Heimdall's crap at finding his way around furniture, rocks or small blades of grass. Getting through doors etc. requires pixel-perfect accuracy, which, since it's a nightmare to stop him walking once you've started, comes down to luck. Even going up or down relatively wide stairs requires a degree of precision not normally seen outside a micro surgery unit. This is not only irritating, it also effects the game since you lose confidence in it. Can you not get through that door because it's locked or because the program's too crap to let you through?

Almost as bad is the combat. Not only is your character's response to your frantic "Fight" commands fairly unreliable but they both have an alarming tendency to turn away from an opponent and hack at the air. This happened to me more times than not. I'd line up with some goblin , click on the right mouse button and watch resignedly as my Heimdall or Ursha turned away and started fighting imaginary enemies behind them.

Ultimately, the only solution is to run away all the time (a philosophy I've always been a devoted follower of), but then you find you can't get through the door/up and down the stairs/over the snowflake and there's no point trying to turn round. Death becomes you.

There are other elements of the game that are odd (when one character dies it vanishes, the other character reappears some way off, yet is immediately able to pick up all their deceased companion's items) or downright irritating (when both characters are dead you don't get a chance to restore a game, instead you get kicked out to DOS). However, it's the control system that did it for me. At heart *Heimdall 2* is a good, probably a very good game, but for me the control system made it virtually unplayable. If it played even averagely well I think the game would have scored high '60s, maybe even '70s, as it is, the only reason it gets the score it does is that I'm such an old softy. I don't know whether it's the fault of the game or the conversion but it's bloomin' irritating. Oh and the manual's crap as well. Z



If only they'd installed a usable control interface this would have made Heimdall a winner instead of a wind-up.

Good to see the push up bra is still fashionable in fantasy land.

Minimum Memory: 640Kb
Minimum Processor: 386 20MHz
Hard Disk Space Required: 14.5Mb (approx)
Graphics Modes Supported: VGA
Sound Cards Supported: Roland, AdLib, Sound Blaster, PC Speaker
Controls: Keyboard, mouse
Price: £39.99 **Release Date:** Out now
Publisher: Core Design **Tel:** 0332 297797

KICK OFF 3

If you divide the number of yellow cards given during World Cup USA '94 by the number of sending offs, and then times this by the number of dives Klinsman made in the penalty area, you get the exact number of footie games released for the PC this summer. Jeremy Wells goes off in search of fast-paced football, fouls and flying Germans with *Kick Off 3*.

THE THING about the original *Kick Off* games was that they were fast! Sure, you could bend the ball, bang it half way up the pitch and make short passes (sometimes even controlled ones), but I for one couldn't help thinking that things might be a little easier if everyone would just mellow out a little and stop rushing around like a group of five-year olds in leotards desperate for the loo. I mean, hey man! This is supposed to be football, remember? The last time I saw people running around like that was at the end of the Benny Hill show.

A game of two halves

As usual there are loads of different player options and features, such as set-piece free kicks, "intelligent" corners, set plays, team stats, match facts, and even a team talk feature that enables you to instruct your team to "drop back", "sit on it" or "get stuck in". Each country will also play to a definite style so tactics are very important. As a result, you're not just a player but also a manager in that you are responsible for team selection, tactics, formation and how your team perform. In this respect *Kick Off 3* is not just an arcade kickabout, but a bit of a management sim to boot (sorry).

Each player in your squad has certain skills and attributes (except, that is, when you're playing Scotland) and it is up to you to choose the best first eleven for each game depending on who you're playing.

Players can also flick the ball up to volley it, execute flying headers and scissor kicks, as well as bend the ball, chip it and make short passes. The computer takes over in some situations and makes crosses and clearances for you depending on how you waggle your joystick.

As well as international friendlies, tournaments and cup matches there are a number of practice routines to help you become more proficient, such as dribble and shoot runs, various free kicks and corners, as well as practice matches which allow you to get used to the controls. You can also adjust the speed of your players (three levels) as well as the amount of ball control or stickability.

Gameplay isn't really up to much, but there are loads of player options.

What about the game?

The game is played from left to right from an overhead 45 degree view. This takes a little getting used to as you can't always see whether you're running or shooting on goal, especially if you're in the faster mode. The sprites are quite large, if a little blobby, and player control can get a bit sluggish unless you've got a speedy machine. The player speed and ball control options are very useful, giving the game a certain accessibility, and you can pretty much find your way around the game thanks to the simple menu system.

Overall, ball control isn't great, and that's being kind. The game's best played with a joypad or a quick joystick, but you sometimes feel as though you're not in complete control, especially when making crosses, taking corners and free kicks. Ball skills do come with practice and the training screens are a useful diversion in one-player mode. The goalie is computer controlled except during penalties, leaving you to take goal kicks and throws. He's pretty average, although he never comes off his line which can be a bit frustrating.

The result after extra time...

Kick Off 3 is indeed a strange beast. It's packed full of player options, but overall gameplay just isn't there. Ball/player control can be quite terrible at times, leaving you completely frustrated, whilst the fact that the crowd merely mumbles when you score a goal, but launches into rapturous fits of joy when you have a near miss, gives you a feeling that it's not quite finished.

Chances are that you've already got a footie game tucked away somewhere (probably Sensi) and if so I would recommend you sit tight and wait for a decent arcade/management footie game to come out that isn't based entirely on the World Cup. Z

SCORE

55

Lots of nice features, but gameplay not up to much.

Minimum Memory: 4Mb RAM
Minimum Processor: 386SX 33
Hard Disk Space Required: 3Mb
Graphics Modes Supported: VGA
Sound Cards Supported: Sound Blaster Compatibles
Controls: Joystick, Keypad
Price: £29.99 **Release Date:** Out now
Publisher: Anco **Tel:** 0322 292513

Manchester United

Premier League Champions

At last! A football game that's not based on World Cup '94. It must be too good to be true. We sent Jeremy Wells along to Old Trafford to find out.

I DID SAY to myself before I started to review this game that I would try my hardest not to mention *Sensible Soccer*. It is, however, quite simply the best footie game ever developed (even on the PC) and is used by everyone who plays football games on their PC as a yardstick by which to judge others. Try as hard as you might, people just can't help making comparisons. You install a new footie game and are just about to go into half time when someone wanders into the office. "What's this?"

"That new footie game from (wherever)."

"It looks Okay – is it as good as Sensi?"

""Well, it's not that bad. I haven't really played it much yet."

"Fancy a game of Sensi then?"

"Yeah, Okay, so long as I can be Italy?"

I only mentioned it once

To be fair, the gameplay is not bad, but it's just not quite a polished as "you know what". The sprites are small, though not quite as nicely done. Ball control is fairly impressive, but not quite as responsive, and the sound is about on a par i.e. not really that good at all. However, it's certainly very playable and contains all the usual features (after touch, flying headers, volleys etc.) as well as overhead kicks and power deflections, which can knock players over if they're hit especially hard with the ball.

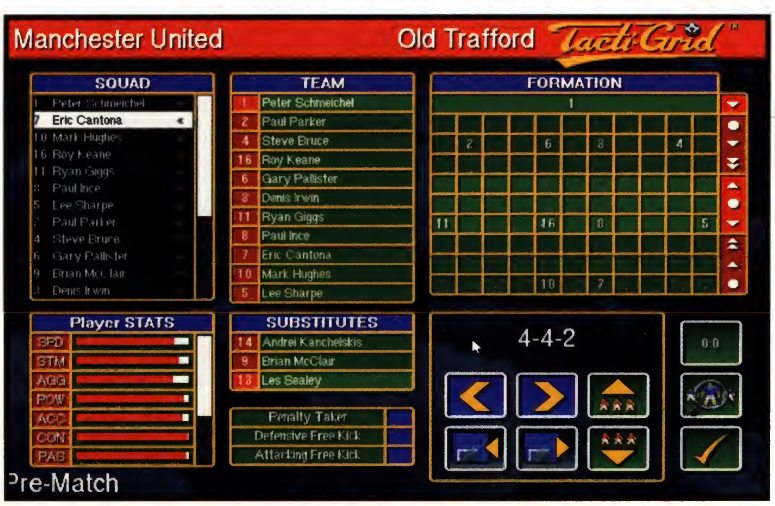
There is (thankfully) no offside rule and the referee's decisions were never completely lunatic, allowing you to make some pretty hard tackles, but as it says in the manual: "Finally you should know that, as in the real world, referees sometimes make mistakes." Oh really?

Glory, glory Man Utd?

As for the team set-up side of things it really is rather good. Presentation is top class, with "pictures" of Man Utd's players accompanying the credits in various "right on" action poses, whilst all the team set-up menus are in colourful hi-res graphics. You can adjust the pitch, surface, weather, play a variety of tournaments, friendlies and a league. You can choose to play any team from the league, as well as non-league and GM Conference league teams and, as you might expect, teams at the lower end don't play so fast or as skillfully as their Premier League cousins. Playing a full season takes time, but there is a save game facility and a special custom league in which you can set the number of teams (2–24), points for a win (1–5) and how many times you play a team.

Once you've selected a team you can start to prepare your squad for championship glory. Each player has a number of statistics that you can view: speed, stamina, aggression, ball skills, accuracy etc., to allow you to pick your best squad. The screen also shows whether a player is injured, whether he's fit to play, current suspensions and morale. You can also choose which player will take your corners, defensive and attacking free kicks – a nice touch. Not surprisingly, most of the Man Utd team had incredible stats, especially Ryan Giggs, but then they would wouldn't they?

Probably the best feature of the game is the Tacti-grid. Basically it's a pitch split into 99 squares which enables you to play any player anywhere on the field and make up your own detailed formations. You can then instruct players to run forward, hang back or just sit on it. There are eight basic formations to use as a base, but it's much better being able to give specific players specific roles and makes you feel like you're really in control of your team. I don't know why it hasn't been done before.



And the final result is...

Manchester United Premier League Champions (*MUPLC*) is definitely a step in the right direction. The number of options and especially the squad set-up control system is really quite excellent, allowing for plenty of scope and extended playability. On the actual match side of things, *MUPLC* is not at all bad, but (yes, there's always a "but") it has to be said that overall player control is not as good as it could have been.

If you haven't already got a footie sim for your PC and fancy a little more in the way of options than Sensi has to offer, go and buy *MUPLC* if only to be a little different.

(Above) Well it looks a lot like Sensi, but it doesn't really play like it, so don't go expecting too much.
(Below left) The Tacti-grid is a useful feature and enables you to initiate detailed, tactical formations and scenarios, all in beautiful high-res. graphics.

Sensi revisited, but not as good, with a nice lot of features thrown in.

Minimum Memory: 4Mb Ram
Minimum Processor: 386SX (386 33MHz recommended)
Hard Disk Space Required: 9Mb
Graphics Modes Supported: VGA 256 Colour
Sound Cards Supported: Sound Blaster
Controls: Keyboard, mouse

Price: £29.99 **Release Date:** Out now
Publisher: Krisalis **Tel:** 0709 372290

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Bargain.Bin

For all those skint (or just plain tight) games players out there, we've dug out these bargains especially for you.

KGB

The game *KGB* is yet another that helps add to the vast number of point-and-click adventure games available for the PC.

It is set, unsurprisingly, in Russia in 1991 (before the collapse of the Soviet Union), where you control a middle-ranking KGB officer by the name of Rukov. Your aim appears to be to get promoted to a higher authority by fulfilling various tasks and missions during the game. Mess these up, and you'll be duly assigned to a mission of lesser importance, such as a five-year Tour of Duty in Siberia. When this happens, it's game over time.

Unfortunately, these demotions are likely to happen a lot, and I don't think that this is solely due to my ineptitude at adventure games but more to do with the game itself. As with a lot of the games in this genre you can't do half the things you'd like to, and the only way to progress seems to be to click at everything in sight and eventually you'll come up with something useful. Or not, as the case usually is. The most infuriating aspect of *KGB* is that generally the only way to get anywhere in the game seems to be through talking to other people, which may eventually lead to something, such as a clue or an object. However, to obtain these clues is less a test of how clever your interviewing technique is, but more a case of trying it over and over again until the interviewee finally gives you – for no apparent reason – what you need.

Although *KGB* is moderately enjoyable on the first couple of goes, I have a feeling that, after prolonged gameplay, its repetitive nature will drive you up the wall. Also, it's hard enough remembering "ordinary" names in games, but when most of the characters are Russians, with about a billion "something-cov" and "name-ski's", you've got about as much chance of recalling these at the appropriate moments as your average Russian punter has at getting a melon from "Moscow Grocers" without a week-long queue.

The music in this game is horrible, and Graphic wise the game is pretty standard, although the majority of the characters faces look as if they were all affected by Chernobyl. There are far better games of this genre available on budget, such as *Monkey Island*, and you'd be better off spending your pennies on those games rather than on this rather boring adventure.

Bin.Verdict:
Bargain? Maybe.
Boring? Definately.

SCORE 65

specs
Minimum Memory: 580k
Minimum Processor: 286 or better
Hard Disk Space Required: NA
Graphics Modes Supported: VGA 256 only
Sound Cards Supported: AdLib, Sound Blaster, Roland
Controls Supported: Keyboards, mouse and joystick

PPrice: £14.99 **Release Date:** Out now **Publisher:** Hit Squad **Telephone:** 061 832 6633

Summer Challenge's mixtures of sprites and polygons is pretty impressive.

Summer Challenge

Summer Challenge, rather unsurprisingly, is a sports sim of the Summer Olympics. There are eight different events to participate in, ranging from archery to cycling, with the option of either simply training in a specific event, or attempting to tackle them all in the Olympic tournament. Most of these events are based around hitting and holding buttons at the right time, and often seem more like a memory test; once you've learnt the correct technique for an event, it's extremely easy to master it.

This wasn't always the case, though, as many moons ago, all sports games featured a lot of so-called joystick waggling. This really wasn't much fun, as not only could this waggling lead to a strained wrist, but it also meant you had to have an almost endless supply of joysticks because each one would break after a couple of intense "waggles". These days, though, those oh-so-clever games development chappies have realised that most of us don't have zillions of joysticks to waggle and break, and so have resorted to the all new "button basher". Unfortunately, anyone with a joystick featuring autofire (i.e. about everyone) can cheat, and thus obtain perfect times in many events. Okay, you're not meant to cheat, but nearly everyone will. Probably. And if you add this to the fact that the game is quite easy to master anyway, then it doesn't look like it's going to have a very long shelf life.

Even so, the games are all quite enjoyable to play, and the presentation is pretty good; the mixtures of sprites and polygons works well, keeping the game moving at a reasonable rate without looking horrible. As usual, the sound is appalling, but no one plays on PC games with the sound up, do they?

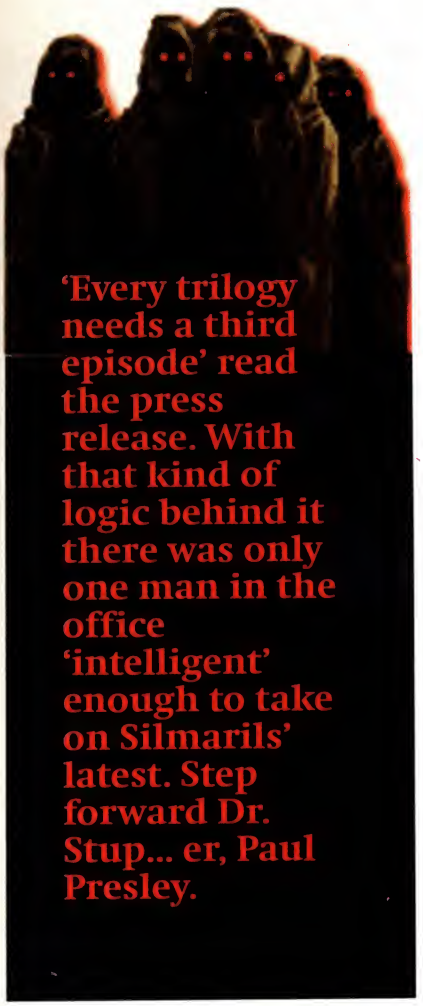
The main problem behind *Summer Challenge* lies not in the game itself, but in the genre; sports games, are, by and large, dull. The multi-player mode (not simultaneous) may help matters, but once you've mastered most of the events, you're not going to want to return to them regularly. If you really want to get a sports sim you could do a lot worse than this one, but do you really want a sports sim when there are a lot of better games available?

Bin.Verdict: Not a bad game by sports sims' standards and easy to cheat at, but do you really want *another* sport sim?

SCORE 73

specs
Minimum Memory: 580k
Minimum Processor: 286 or better
Minimum Hard Disk Space: 2.5Mb
Graphic Modes Supported: 256 VGA only
Sound Cards Supported: AdLib, Sound Blaster, Thunderboard, PC speaker **Controls Supported:** Keyboard and joystick

Price: £12.99 **Release Date:** Out now **Publisher:** Hit Squad **Telephone:** 061 832 6633



Ishar III: The Seven Gates Of Infinity

'Every trilogy needs a third episode' read the press release. With that kind of logic behind it there was only one man in the office 'intelligent' enough to take on Silmarils' latest. Step forward Dr. Stup... er, Paul Presley.

THERE WAS a moment during my time with Silmarils' latest dip into the murky swimming pool of role-playing games when I swear it suddenly realised how bad it was and decided to try and make up for its shortcomings. I was strolling through a standard, run-of-the-mill fantasy townscape when for no reason at all it sent me on a pub crawl! I was supposed to be looking for a wizard's apprentice or somesuch, found a note saying he was waiting at a tavern, but didn't tell me where it was. Hence I had to trudge around town, from one pub to the next (there were over 15 of them... I think The Big Troffer had the best ale to clean table ratio, four stars – highly recommended... sorry, hic, where was I?) *(Any bloody excuse! – Ed.).*

But, as you've probably guessed, that was about the only high point of this otherwise uninspired, unoriginal, unrewarding attempt to cash in on a former success. You see, despite the fact that I've yet to see a favourable review of an *Ishar* game, the series has steadily built up a small but dedicated band of followers. Of course, even Spurs have a small but dedicated band of followers so I guess there's no accounting for taste. With that in mind, then, I'll split the review into three parts. A bit for those who've enjoyed the series, a bit for those who couldn't care less about the series (which will be a good bit with a couple of celebrities being mentioned) and a nice sort of summing up bit at the end. Of course, I'll be slagging it off in all three bits so perhaps you should bear that in mind before we begin.

Fans of the series

As you might recall, this whole journey began with *Crystals of Arborea* in which a goodly Elf (aided by a plucky band of heroes) became the ruler of Kendoria after a vicious magical battle. Never one to let a good thing lie (or in this case a fairly average thing lie), Silmarils released *Ishar: Legend of the Fortress*, featuring you (and your plucky band of heroes) stopping an evil magician enslaving the world. Then came the socially active *Ishar II*, with its underlying message of Don't Do Drugs, dealing as it did with a dope-peddling monk controlling the minds of an entire township. Although *Ishar II* ended with you (and your plucky band of heroes) killing the monk, this is never usually enough to stop them in fantasy games and so naturally, for the sequel to the sequel (to the sequel, if you count *Arborea*) he's returned. Which is a slightly dodgy concept of course, in that it implies that 'Hey kids, taking drugs lets you live forever!'.

The monk, going by the name of Shandar, had secured his return to Ishar's shores by magically freeing his spiritual self from his defeated body. Roaming around the ether, Shandar has located the perfect body to inhabit in order to wreak his terrible revenge on the world: an ancient black dragon known as Wohratax (hey, it's a role-playing game. There had to be someone with an X in his name eventually).

This leads us to the first of *Ishar III*'s main problems – the storyline. Whatever problems the other titles had (and believe me, there were quite a few of them), the one redeeming feature was that they at least had slightly above average storylines, even if they were told in a slightly below average way. For the triumphant finale to the trilogy, though, we find our plucky band of heroes basically having to find a dungeon, trek through it and kill a dragon. The single most basic plotline in the entire fantasy genre.

Now the designers have tried to beef this up by including a time-travel element, but it's here that we fly headlong into the brick wall that Dame Fortune so expediently placed in the path of *Ishar*'s originality. I have a problem with time-travel in that I live for paradoxes. Yes, it's a sad life, I agree, but I love to look at things that deal with time-travel and try to pull them apart ('Yes but Sam couldn't have leapt back and saved Al's marriage because that means Al would never have been involved in the Quantum Leap project and then Sam could never have completed all those leaps etc, etc..."). *Ishar III* requires you to find several time gates and hop back and forward in the Ishar timeline. Trouble is, time-travel only becomes interesting when you can relate to the places you're travelling to. Popping back in Earth's history, for example, is fun

(or so I've been told) because you can witness things that you've only ever read about but have had a bearing on your life.

The first place I travelled back to here was a forest 75 years or so in Ishar's past. Thing is, it might just as well have been a forest on the edge of town for all the historic value it showed. Silmarils hasn't gone to enough lengths to detail its world for us to care what it looked like in the past or what it will become in the future and since these all amount to standard fantasy locales anyway the time-travelling aspect of the game becomes nothing more than a device for going from a jungle location to a mountain location to a forest location.

I've yet to see a decent French role-playing game. Until I do, I'm afraid it's vive les Etats Unis.

Not fans of the series

You've never played an *Ishar* game and you want to know if you should start now. The simple answer is 'no', the main reason being that it is a flick-screen affair, à la *Eye Of The Beholder*. Now I'm not necessarily saying that all flick-screen games are bad, but consider. Almost every first-person perspective game we see these days is smooth-scrolling. *Ultima Underworld* started it and *Doom* rubbed it in our face with venom (and blood and guts and bullets and chainsaws). If you're wanting to play an absorbing, innovative and entertaining role-player, you might as well go with games using Nineties technology rather than trip lightly down the memory lane of the Eighties.

But that's not the only thing that should hold you back. Almost every part of *Ishar III*'s game design is practically screaming 'Go away!'. Let's take a look at character interaction. Imagine, if you will, that you're sitting at the design table in Silmarils' office, discussing various aspects of *Ishar III*'s gameplay. The subject gets round to non-player characters. "Okay," says Rene or Franc or whoever but with a little bit too much phlegm in his throat, "let us put people all over ze town [and forgive my rather stereotyped accenting here, but they are French after all] and if ze players go near zem, dey randomly decide whether or not to talk to zem!" "Bravo, encore, magnifique," the rest all chant in between bouts of Jerry Lewis films *(Jerry Lewis? Godard surely? ... No, perhaps you're right – Ed!)*.

Well, it sounds like a pretty okay idea but it doesn't work for the following reasons. First of all, the people don't move. At all. Day or night you'll find them all standing in exactly the same spot. And they're always facing you, no matter what direction you look at them. They're like those paintings with eyes that follow you all round the room. They're scary. It's like a trip through the Village of the Damned.

Secondly, they speak utter rubbish and tend to contradict themselves at every turn. The very first person I encountered was a waxwork dummy with a sword who randomly decided to tell me that everyone in town hates strangers (that's another one for all you cliché spotters to mark off. You are writing them all down, aren't you? There'll be questions at the end!). The very next person I encountered randomly decided to tell me that he was the Town's Cultural Attaché or something and that as a tourist I should go and visit all the interesting libraries in the area. And this was coming from a guy dressed in little more than a sack, carrying a large club over his shoulder.

Thirdly, and it was around this point that my credibility meter got up and walked out of the room muttering something about going off to snap somewhere, there are about 15 people in the entire town, but a population of something close to a hundred. "Explain Mr. Presley," you request. Repeating graphics, Mr. Reader. For reasons best known to the budgeting department, Silmarils decided to reuse the same graphics over and over again so that, in the space of a single street, it's quite possible to meet the same person four or five times without ever turning around. It reminded me of that Bugs Bunny cartoon where he races the tortoise only to find out there are hundreds of them.

Now okay, Origin (the benchmark designer of RPGs) also does this in some of the *Ultimas*, but to a very limited extent

IN PERSPECTIVE

Ishar III fails to learn from the mistakes of its brethren and instead of ending the trilogy with a bang, actually puts the whole series back a step. Anything is better than this.

Ishar 1

Ishar 11

Ishar III

Every other RPG

Whatever problems the other titles had, the one redeeming feature was the slightly above average storylines, even if told in a slightly below average way. For the triumphant finale to the trilogy, though, we find our plucky band of heroes having to find a dungeon, trek through it and kill a dragon. Highly original. Not.

(usually just guards and watchmen). The company at least has the decency to populate its towns with a large number of individuals, who act in a believable manner. At the moment, that kid who says 'Exactly how much extra pocket money are we talking about' in that Sky advert acts more convincingly than the population of Silmarils' world.

Some people move, but at this point I have to use a phrase that sends a shiver down my spine. Wandering Monsters (shudder). The term comes from the tabletop role-playing game known as *Dungeons & Dragons* (admit it, you've heard of it). It refers to monsters or creatures that are randomly encountered by the heroes in order to spice up the action. We get them here, bandits in the city, buzzing flies in the forest and so on, and they are the biggest pain in the derrière since Noel Edmonds thought it would be funny to dress up in a big pink rubber suit and eliminate any pride we once had in our nation's cultural output.

Wandering monsters don't work in computer games, especially this computer game, for the simple fact that they always, without fail, interfere with the natural progression of the story. Here they go one step further, they help to reinforce the game's unbelievability. I was standing in front of a town guard on a horse who had just randomly decided to tell me that he would keep our streets clean of crime and, as if on cue, along pops a bunch of bandits and engages me in a fight, the guard remaining motionless in the background. Of course, it could have been an accurate simulation of the West Midlands Police, but somehow I doubt it.

'I'm one of those silly people who buy computer games simply because the graphics look good. Should I?' Well, you are silly, aren't you? *Ishar III* has a few moments of graphical splendour, but not many. Mostly these occur in set animations such as time-travelling, but they are sadly let down by the rest of the game. As I said previously, Silmarils has decided to cut corners and reuse the same graphics over and over again, for the people, the buildings and the locations.

Always finish on a song

No, don't worry, I'm not going to sing. That was a rather weak way of saying I'm closing the review and I'm going to mention the sound. It's awful (but after taking the rest of the review into account that's hardly surprising, is it?). It's the kind of scratchy digitised rubbish we were getting about five years ago when the SoundBlaster was still just an Ad Lib upgrade and no one had ever heard of a Roland.

Sum up *Ishar III* in one word? Avoid. Simple as that. It's a very poor end to a pretty poor series. They may be able to make stunning films about female assassins and conjure up the most mouth-watering of dishes using little more than a lettuce leaf, but I've yet to see a decent French role-playing game. Until I do, I'm afraid it's *vive les Etats Unis*. PZ

SCORE

Sum up *Ishar III* in one word? Avoid. Simple as that. The worst of a bad bunch.

Minimum Memory: 4Mb
Minimum Processor: 386
Minimum Speed: 16MHz
Installation: Essential
Minimum Hard Disk: 8Mb
Minimum Graphics: VGA
Sound Cards: Soundblaster,
Controls: Keyboard, Mouse Joystick
Price: £39.99 **Release Date:** Early September
Publisher: Silmarils **Tel:** (071) 328 2762

Ishar III has a few moments of graphical splendour, but mostly these are in time-travel set pieces. Very moving.

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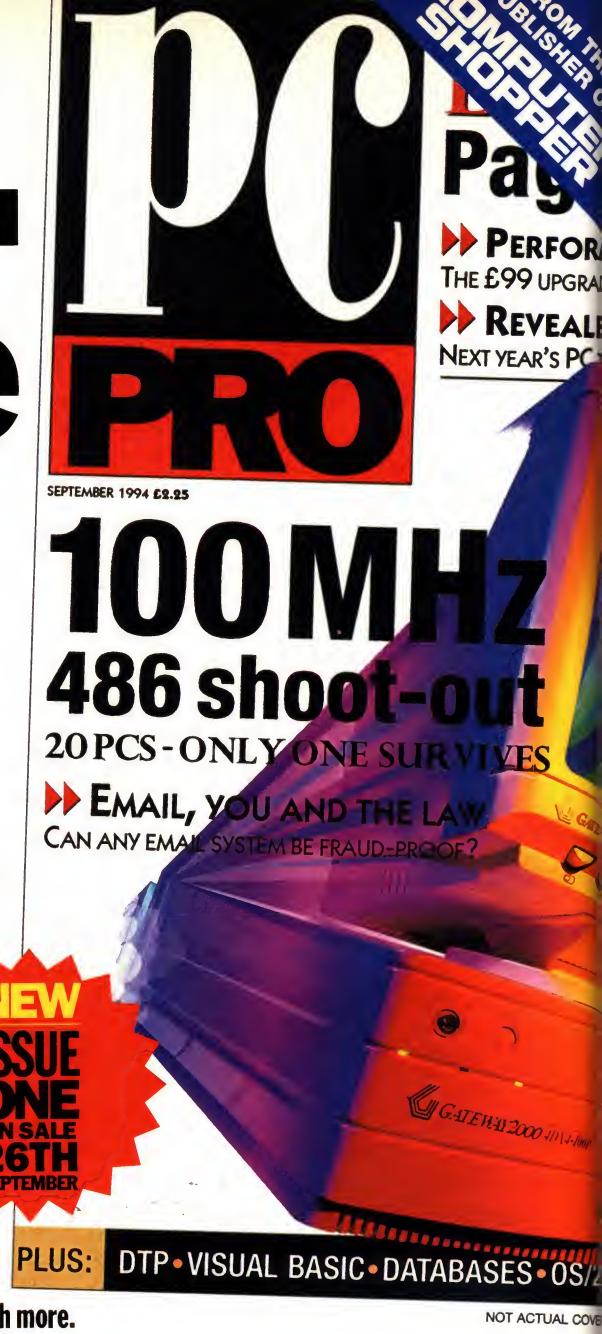

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THE INDY CAR RACING EXPANSION PACK

"What are your views on add-on disks?" we asked Duncan MacDonald.
"Cynical marketing ploys, I hate them," he said.
"Then you won't be interested in looking at the new tracks for *Indycar Racing*," we said.
"Er, actually... er, er, er, er..." he replied, instantly tossing all moral objections through the nearest open window.

OKAY, there's not a lot to say here. If you're into serious car sims you must own *Indycar* by now, and you'll probably be bored with most of the tracks (seeing as they're nearly all ovals). Yeah? Well, here's a newsflash: of the seven new tracks in this upgrade, only one is an oval. Hoorah! (Unless you're actually into ovals, of course, in which case make that a 'boo!').

But anyway, so what are the courses like to drive? The answer to this is 'brilliant'. At least a couple of them rank alongside the excellent Laguna Seca, which you'll no doubt be familiar with by now, and the rest are easily as much fun as, say, Portland International. Oh, and there's that really 'weird' track, too, the one you'll have seen if you regularly watch *Nigel Mansell's Indycar Racing*. It's the one that's actually an airfield: Cleveland Lakefront Airport, to give it its full title. I've always wondered what it must feel like to race on roads that wide, and now I've got an idea: nightmare. But enough descriptive stuff on the courses, because I've created mini storyboards for each and every one of them. What I will talk about, however, is the evil face of 'creative' marketing peering greedily over the proceedings.

"People on the dole shouldn't be allowed to play computer games." – Sir Bufton Tufton MP.

(Above) An extra option, is to play count the ads as you whizz around the track.

Cash, cash, cash

They're at it again, the jolly software vendors. Capitalism rules, okay. And I'm not talking about this being an add-on disk, either. The courses are so good that whether or not you think the entire season's tracks should have come with the original game (like they did in *Microprose Grand Prix*), you'll still be forced to conclude, at the end of the day, that you've got your money's worth. So we're all happy there. But (yes, there's a but), you may or may not have noticed this, but when you take the number of tracks from the original game, and add it to the number of tracks on this add-on disk, the result is 15. The thing is, though, that the real-life Indycar season actually has 16 meetings. And yes, you would indeed be correct (well done) in deducing from this that very possibly one of the tracks has gone walkabout. But the questions are as follows: (a) which track has gone walkabout, and (b) where exactly has it gone walkies to? See if you can guess the answer to either of these questions before continuing.

(Above) The open road – a minefield for wheelies and handbrake turns.

ADD-ON NIGHTMARES

AUSTRALIA

Surfer's paradise, eh? Chicane lover's paradise more like. Or advert reader's paradise, seeing as there are loads of bridges with advertising copy plastered agumbo. Your first couple of laps will see you constantly braking to a halt and reversing back to re-read what the previous bridge was trying to sell you. Kangaroo Burgers? Koala Juice? There's even one bridge that proclaims "Mates don't let mates drink and drive". Hmmm, a snappy ad hookline that one, eh? (er, not).

Here's my own personal favourite chicane of the race. And don't let the angle of the shot put you off, by the way, because I really did make it through – at about 100mph to boot. There are some hairier chicanes, some vicious 90-degree corners, and not a great deal in the way of open straights. It's a bloody long course though, even with the absence of massive straights, and consequently takes some time to 'learn'. (And considerably longer to master, needless to say.)

ADD-ON NIGHTMARES

MID OHIO

Quite an uppy and downy course, this one. It's nowhere near Laguna Seca in the altitude stakes, but it makes for a merry ride, nevertheless. For instance, the blind corners. There you are, chugging up a hill at over 200mph, when suddenly the hill isn't a hill anymore... it's a 90-degree left hander instead. You may think a track such as this begs for loads and loads and loads of run-off areas. And guess what? Yes, there are loads and loads and loads of run-off areas.

By far the scariest moment in any rookie *Indycar* racer's life is when he first has to pass beneath Mid Ohio racetrack's bridge. The distance between the top of the average helmet and the underneath of the gigantic concrete construction is measured in angstroms (17 of them, if you want an actual number). The greatest cause of concern to drivers racing at Mid Ohio, after each pitstop, is whether or not their latest set of tyres have been accidentally over-inflated.

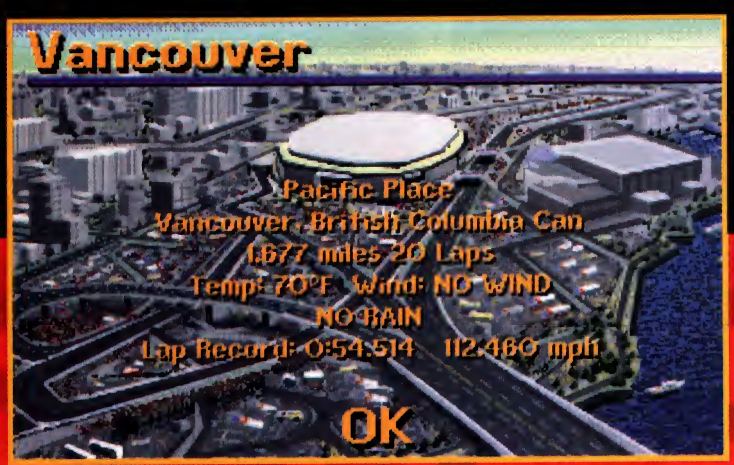
PHOENIX

I thought ovals were bad enough, but then, thanks to this add-on disk, I encountered Phoenix. Less of an oval and more of a circle, it's like a giant bloody ring doughnut, surrounded by desert. Typical, I suppose, that a city as downright horrible as Phoenix should have a racetrack to match. The best thing you can do if you're going to race at this course is to sellotape your joystick (or poncey steering yolk) in the required position (i.e. left) and then go to the pub for a bevvy.

So how do I describe this screenshot? A picture is meant to paint a thousand words, but unfortunately this picture only paints about one... i.e. 'yawnsville'. I'll try to elaborate, though. Er, the replay is showing the view as seen through the lens of TV camera number one. The camera is zoomed in, giving a slightly foreshortened effect, regarding relative distances. I am overtaking another car. There's a left hand bend coming up. (But then there always is, isn't there?)

VANCOUVER

Yo ho," I thought when I first saw this picture shining out of my monitor, "I'll be able to drive south through US border control, and into Washington State. I can park the car in Seattle for a while, pose grungily, and visit the place Jimi Hendrix was born." I was going to visit Mount St Helens, too – the volcano that blew itself to smithereens. But then I realised that the Vancouver racetrack was in fact the road underneath the freeway How we all laughed!



The Vancouver track feels a bit like Monaco. Indeed, if there was an uppy/downy bit, it might be even better than Monaco. Maybe they should put one in. I say do it. Then again, maybe the local council would frown on someone demolishing a large part of the city just to add a hill. Oh, and if you're wondering what I'm doing in the screenshot, I've pulled up in the middle of a race, and am watching the giant television monitor. *Beavis And Butthead* is on in a minute.

CLEVELAND

Yes, it's that one. The airfield. And I don't even have to explain the twisty-ness and turny-ness of the thing, because you can quite clearly see for yourself. However, it's worth noting that while all is crystal clear from a bird's eye view, it's a different ball game altogether when you're strapped into the car, with your bum only inches from the tarmac. You can get 'lost'. On my first time round I was squinting at the screen, travelling at 9mph, fear in the pit of my stomach. Pathetic, really.

And because you never know what's coming next (until you learn the course), it's all so easy to drive into the side of a car that *does* know. See those cars, for instance? They knew full well there was a right hander coming up. Muggins here, who as far as he was concerned was in the Gobi desert, didn't, and is about to crash. Oh, and I might mention that there's one tiny, weeny section of the track that, should you drive over it, induces a couple of seconds of jerk-o-vision.

DETROIT

It's a groovy little course, this one, and the chances are high that you've driven somewhere like it already, in your own car. (Or in someone else's car, if you're a joyrider.) You know what it's like when you take to the country lanes, in the evening, and just go bonkers? And how you go for all those racing lines that make your faint-hearted passengers say "Slow down, slow down," or "There might be someone coming the other way." This is like that...

But with the added attraction of knowing that nothing *will* be coming the other way (unless you're doing the old 'going the wrong way round the track' gig, in which case we're back to the country lane analogy with a vengeance). About the only difference, in fact, between this track and a genuine country lane, is that when you get it wrong at Detroit you smash into a barrier and your wheels come off: get it wrong on a country lane and you're upside-down, in a hedge.

ELKHART LAKE

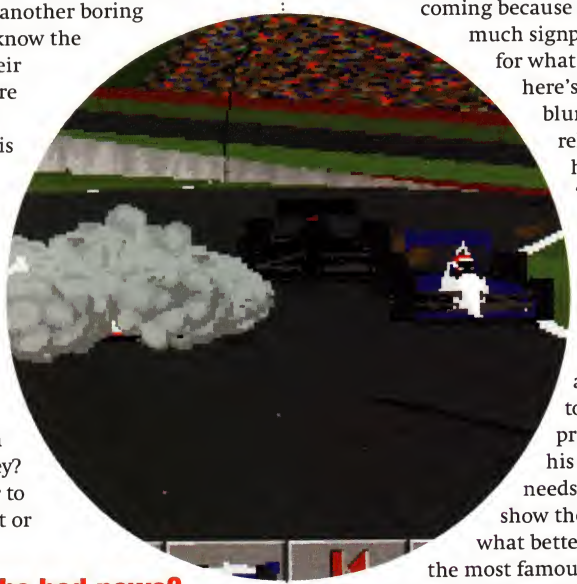
If Detroit is like racing on a country lane, then Elkhart Lake is like racing on an 'A' road. It's not totally unlike the Formula One course in Hockenheim. It's a different shape, obviously, but it's a mixture of massive tree-lined straights with some scarily tight sections thrown in for good measure. It's one of those tracks where you'll probably lop off most of the downforce for straight line speed, but then crash when you reach the bendy bits (that's what happened to me, anyway).

Well, what more can I say? I'll just briefly hand over to those annoying American blokes who regularly commentate on Nigel Mansell's TV programme... "Look at him go, jeez, that li'l Al sure knows how to party". "He sure does, and this is his party, and he'll win if he wants to!" And, unbelievable though it may sound, they actually said those words once. Terrible commentary, absolutely (gets all snobbish) unspeakable. Uncouth. Awful.

REVIEW Indycar Tracks

Given up yet?

Right. The chances are high that you'll have guessed the answer to the first question, but I doubt very much if you'll have sussed the second. Here goes. The missing track is the so-called biggest event of the year on the Indycar calendar: namely the Indianapolis 500. Quite an omission, even if it is just another boring oval (and yes, I know the Yanks cream their pants at the mere mention of the place). But why is it missing? Surely the money people at Papyrus or wherever didn't really think they could get away with releasing it as another data-disk, all on its own. Did they? And the answer to this is, believe it or not, 'sort of'.



Ready for the bad news?

If you're a die-hard completist (or an American with creamed-up undies), then don't close your wallet just yet, because there is indeed going to be yet another add-on, turning the *Indycar* phenomenon into a rather expensive trilogy. How the next 'package' works is as follows. It's called the *Indycar Paint Shop*. What it allows you to do (and I haven't seen it yet, so I can't slag it off too much, and I'm guessing a bit), is to customise the graphics of your car. Changing the basic colours is obviously an easy thing to do, so I assume you'll also be able to design your own bitmap decals and so forth. (A Happy Shopper or Londis sticker on the side could be amusing... or Patel's Newsagents, or just a really crap picture of an elephant or a hen.) You get the idea, though. It means that when it comes to running through the replays, you and your chums can also chortle away at the latest 'joke' that's been plastered over the rear wing.

But is it worth forking out for? Would you buy it as a stand-alone? The money people involved here obviously felt that maybe some added inducement might be in order. You'll have guessed what's coming because I've pretty much signposted it, but for what it's worth, here's what the blurb on the press release I'm holding says: "The *Indycar Paintshop*. All the pros need to have their own colours, and now you can design and have yours too. But once a professional has his colours, he needs something to show them off on, so what better place than the most famous Indycar racing track of them all – the Indianapolis 500!"

That's appalling!

It's pretty naughty, isn't it? Still, at least Virgin isn't taking the piss too much regarding the price of this 'extra' add-on: the *Paint Shop/Indianapolis 500* combo is going to cost £9.99. (Let's just call it a tenner, eh?) So time for some maths. The add-on disk we're already looking at here costs 18 quid, which means the tracks cost about £2.50 each. Assuming the Indy 500 track is also worth £2.50, then the *Paint Shop* program (whether you want it or not, by the way) is going to cost you £7.50 – which isn't exactly going to break the bank. It's not so bad when looked at like that, I know, but the basic principle is still galling... and having said £7.50 isn't going to break the bank, well – not so if you happen to be on the dole. ("People on the dole shouldn't be allowed to play computer games! They should be busy looking for work, even in the evenings and on Sundays!" – Sir Bufton Tufton MP.)

(Top right) Schumacher's got nothing on your state of the art baby. (Top left) Some poor bastards are out of the race. *(That's you. Ed.)*

(Left) En route you encounter a cloud. *(That's you, that is. Ed.)*

And so on...

Forget the imminent *Paint Shop* program for now though, and let's just pause to sum up exactly what we've got here, and it's as follows: six rootin' tootin', new road circuits and a snoozy, yawny oval. (Oh, and an automatic INDYCAR.EXE upgrade that means when you blow a tyre in practice, you no longer need to whip off to the garage and get it repaired. You just simply press ESCAPE, then RETURN, and your car is fixed and still in the same position as when you crashed: i.e. no more having to start back at the pits.) All in all, and creative marketing aside, it's something of an essential purchase. Totally brilliant.

These tracks are better than the original tracks (if you pretend Phoenix doesn't exist).

Minimum Memory: 4Mb RAM

Minimum Processor: 386

Hard Disk Space Required: 12Mb

Graphics Modes Supported: VGA

Sound Cards Supported: Music: All major sound cards. Digitised speech and effects: AdLib Gold, Sound Blaster, Sound Blaster Pro, Pro Audio Spectrum

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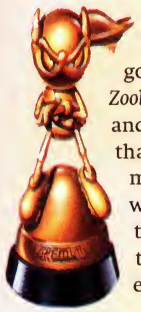

Zool, the Ninja from the Nth Dimension is back, and this time he's got company. Joining his adventures in *Zool 2* is Zooz, the female Ninja (Ninjess?) and Zoon, the cosmic wonderdog. It seems that the evil Mental Block has been morphing everyday objects into deadly weapons. It's up to the Ninja couple from the Nth dimension to battle their way through six bizarre world's and put an end to Mental Block's menace.

Zool 2 's six huge worlds each have a separate theme. They need to be explored thoroughly as Zool and Zooz set out to defeat Mental Block and his manic mates. Zool himself has a whole range of new moves, and you can choose to play either Zool or Zooz. The game is available now on disk or CD and includes a superb animated intro and great new sound effects and music.

To mark the launch of *Zool 2* on PC and CD formats, Gremlin and *PC Zone* are giving away this absoloutely superb 14" GBI remote-control video presenter. We've also a copy of the game on HD disk or CD-ROM for the ten lucky runners up.

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Question time

1 Is Zool...
a) A Ninja from the Nth Dimension?
b) A Ninja from Neptune?
c) A bloke from Brixton who goes to martial arts classes on a Friday night?

2 PAL is short for:
a) Mate
b) Dogmeat
c) Phase Alternated Lines

3 Is Zool 2...
a) A great new spreadsheet program?
b) A splendiferous platform game?
c) A Glaswegian soft drink?

The first correct entry pulled from the editor's beer mug will win its author the video presenter and a copy of *Zool 2*. The next ten correct entries will win a copy of *Zool 2*.

Video games and video players

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COMPETITION

RULES

1. The editor's decision is final and anyone arguing will be consigned to the Nth dimension for good.

2. Entries arriving after 5th October 1994 will be fed to Zoon.

3. You may enter by copying the coupon onto the back of a sealed envelope or postcard, but please indicate clearly if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers, new products, or mental blocks.

4. Employees of Dennis Publishing, Gremlin Graphics or associated companies caught entering this competition will be made to write a personal note of apology to every legitimate entrant (and that's by hand)!

Dark Legions

DARK LEGIONS

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

The Cast

Like chess pieces, each of the 16 creatures you can choose has its strengths and weaknesses though some are a lot more powerful than others. They're listed here in terms of game value.

Andrew Wright hurls fireballs, gores a few orcs and sucks blood in SSI's latest fantasy combat extravaganza.

WITH THE possible exception of *Dune*, most fantasy games have never been too strong on plot. Unfortunately, *Dark Legions* isn't going to change that. From what I can work out from the meandering five-page introduction, the game puts you in an immortal kingdom called Tahr Carog. You hold one of the two orbs of power (yawn) and your mission, should you choose to install the program, is to summon an army of weird and wonderful creatures to defeat the geezer with the other orb. The good news is that he's probably as mystified as you are as to why he has it and just as puzzled.

You don't have to know all that, of course, and as with every other fantasy game I've ever come across, if you want to imagine yourself in the Land of Oz surrounded by some blonde and beautiful Munchkins, then it won't make too much difference.

Thin plot, solid game

The plot might be thin but *Dark Legions* is a good, solid fantasy game that combines strategy and combat in equal proportions. You can play against the computer or another human, either in the same room or by modem.

The idea behind the game is quite simple – you pick your side on a points value basis from a list of 16 strange creatures and do battle in time-honoured fashion by incinerating, poisoning, clubbing, draining or mangling your opponent to death. On screen, of course. To help you get into the right mood of bloodthirstiness, you get some rather wonderful animations. In fact, all that's really missing is the smell of blood and burning flesh. And probably one or two screws on the part of the designer.

Dark Legions is available in two versions: one on floppy disk only and the other on CD-ROM. The former uses no fewer than seven high-density disks and takes up a whopping great 35Mb of hard disk space, while the latter offers two options. You can go for the full installation (using over 40Mb of hard disk space) or a partial installation that uses only 4Mb of disk space but loads the animation elements directly from CD-ROM. If you have a double-speed drive or better, this shouldn't be a problem, but those of you still struggling with single-speed drives might get a little frustrated. If this sounds like typical reviewer style hardware snobbery, it isn't. I'm one of the strugglers...

There are no options for uninstalling the animations either, which could be a problem if your existing drive is double spaced to the hilt and you already have a decent game or two installed. You can turn them off inside the program but not delete them entirely. Let's face it, if you don't have half a gigabyte of free space these days, you're nobody. Well, this nobody had to delete *CorelDRAW* just to make some space, so don't get all uppity.

Installation is a bit of a doddle once you've removed half the contents of your drive and the last three months' hard work. It takes a while, but the program automatically checks over your system, highlights what's needed (such as the amount of free base RAM) and reminds you to install mouse drivers or whatever.

Getting started is easy and the manual is short and to the point. Each of the creatures is listed in detail with enough hints on gameplay to get you into the thick of it. The first thing to do is choose whether to play a game from the list of ten ready-made scenarios, or jump in at the deep end and make up your own army. Playing against the computer, you choose a starting point value, a map from a list of 20 or 30, and options such as computer level and the maximum number of moves per turn. This speeds up modem or two-player games and makes it a lot more exciting.

The computer level ranges from hopeless to merciless but I found it a hard opponent, especially in combat, even on weak and normal levels. Unfortunately, there is no way to specify a high strategic level and low 'arcade' level, which I suspect would suit many.

Next comes the army selection screen. You can choose one of six types of ring to gain extra powers for the wearer and seven types of traps to place on your map as well as the creatures, so long as you don't exceed your point allowance. That done, the computer selects its army and off you

Conjurer: Ladies first. They're expensive but they're good. Conjurers can create weaker versions of the other creatures, such as trolls, demons and elementals, making them handy to have at the back. Unfortunately, if they mix it with the nasties, they don't stand a chance.

Demon: Big, red and ugly, these mothers are pretty terrifying – the Tahr Carog equivalents of Tiger tanks. Not only do they breathe fire and lash out with their claws, but they stomp all over your roses and generally behave very badly. They look a little dodgy when up against fire elementals but everything else should turn and run.

Vampire: These little dears can paralyse a creature and drain away its life force in short order, or even turn defeated creatures into zombies. A squadron of anti-vampire vampires is handy to have around as only demons can really mangle them.

Shape Shifter: Shape shifters are sneaky little blighters that can look like harmless seers and thieves one minute and turn into vampires or demons the next. They're great for setting traps or holding the orb as they can move quickly too. They're fun in combat – watch your opponent's face when the scrawny little orc turns red and starts hurling fireballs.

Water elemental: Though they might sound as useful as a flushed toilet, they can move from one body of water to another and shoot great balls of water, making them quite deadly, particularly against fire elementals.

Fire elemental: Hot little numbers these and my favourites. They can shoot fireballs or do a wonderful kamikaze act, creating supernova that incinerate any characters nearby, as well as themselves. The movement animation is nothing short of spectacular.

Phantoms: Invisibility is the phantom's weapon and pretty handy it is too. It makes for much hilarity in the combat screen when playing head to head, via modem.

Illusionist: Illusionists are similar to conjurers but the creatures they create are easily defeated, being fakes rather than real flesh and bone (or whatever these things are made of). Pity they're bald.

Wraith: Wraiths are fairly weak but make good infiltrators and assassins as they can teleport great distances. In combat they add the damage they inflict to their own life force, so if you can get in a couple of quick blows, you're laughing. Or should I say, wailing.

Wizard: Perhaps surprisingly, these are well down the list in terms of power. They can freeze opponents on the strategic map and defend quite usefully in combat. Let's face it, the ice balls spell is no fun at all.

Seer: These are real weaklings, but as they can detect traps, destroy illusions and spot invisible characters automatically, they're vital and have nice legs too. The befuddle attack is good – your opponent's joystick starts to behave strangely...

Templar: The templars are the healers of the game and make a useful addition to any group. They're also good against the undead, such as vampires and wraiths.

Troll: Big, clumsy and awkward, I feel a natural affinity with these poor things. They make good bodyguards, can turn to stone and wait in ambush, and can deal out a fair old amount of damage. Best not to laugh at their ear-rings...

Thief: Thieves can disarm an opponent's traps which can make them useful. When you do decide to try out a trap, you get presented with a puzzle in the form of a mini-game. They're also good fun in combat as they can do back flips and somersaults.

Orc: Orcs are real morons and make good cannon fodder. Their special attack is a charge, which is worth seeing, but they don't stand much of a chance against the heavies. That said, half a dozen orcs can grind down anyone in consecutive attacks.

Berserker: Berserkers are worth the fewest points of all, but that doesn't make them weak. They have more stamina than orcs, but don't inflict quite so much damage. It's worth having a few squads of these characters to use as the poor bloody infantry.

The monster mash

The hints and tips gives you a rough idea of how to plan a battle, but after a few games you'll find your own strategies. You can choose a more intelligent army, using guile and trickery to win through, or just a bunch of hard-drinking, loud-mouthed thugs. Creatures can be grouped into squads for mutual protection, or massed in ranks for a jolly rampage over everything in sight. A good combination is a couple of berserkers as 'infantry', a demon or fire elemental as the 'armoured' element and a wizard for the 'artillery'.

Endless other strategies are possible too. Send a few wraiths and phantoms to scout out the enemy positions, then send in a seer/thief team or two to detect illusions and traps. If you think you know who your opponent's orb holder is, you can assemble a long-range strike force. Try a team of shape shifters disguised as vampires to fly over obstacles, turning into vampires, fire elementals or demons when they arrive.

Name a strategy and it will work. Well, it might work. You can lure an opponent into a troll trap with a shape shifter disguised as a seer, place physical traps to make a killing ground or launch diversions with wave after wave of illusionary characters. Of course, you have to watch out for the same thing, particularly from a human opponent. The computer opponent is weak on strategy and strong on arcade/combat skills, but it can create illusions and traps just the same.

toddle to place the unmentionables on the map.

The ring of confidence

At this stage you can assign rings to each creature and give one the orb. This character becomes the equivalent of the king in a game of chess. Lose him and that's that. On the other hand, the orb holder gains power, so if you give it to your favourite demon, along with a few rings, you become the Arnold Schwarzenegger of Tahr Carog.

The strategy map, which you can view from above or in 3D, is a square grid, much like a board game. With the aid of the mouse, characters can move backwards, forward and sideways, but not diagonally and, apart from vampires, they can't move across trees, chasms or boulders. Some can cross water but not all. This makes it easy to

trap enemy characters by placing your own around them. Trolls can even turn to stone and act as another boulder.

The movement of each creature is wonderfully animated – the demon stamps, the fire elemental flames and the vampire flies, for instance, and while slow, it is tremendously atmospheric. You can turn it off to speed things up but you start to miss it after a while...

Other options are escort (good for moving groups), move to the orb holder or move to a specific location. Each creature's power can be used in strategic mode (wizards freeze, templars heal, etc.) and you can examine its stats at any time. Your opponents will only come into view when one of your pieces can see them.

When one piece is moved on top of another, there's a digitised statement of intent from the attacker ("You're going to burn" or "I smell blood") and the combat stage begins. This is an arcade-style sequence seen from above and involves fast and furious play with either the joystick or keyboard. Two players can play side by side using joystick or keyboard and this can be great fun. Many characters have two or even three different attacks, using a mixture of keyboard keys or joystick buttons, and with such a combination of characters and attacks, it will take a long time to get boring. *Streetfighter 2* it ain't, but it's gore-spattering fun all the same.

IN PERSPECTIVE

A nicely orchestrated mixture of strategy and arcade action that should provide blood-spurting fun for all the family.

Dark Legions

Battlechess

King's Table

A bit of a Dark Legions rave – it looks like something from Whose Line Is It Anyway, except it's missing Tony Slattery so you might actually enjoy it.

85 SCORE

Wonderfully entertaining animations and game screens with hidden strategic depths.

Minimum Memory: 4Mb RAM

Minimum Processor: 386/486 (DOS 5)

Hard Disk Space Required: 4Mb for CD-ROM/35Mb for floppy disk version

Graphics Modes Supported: VGA

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Controls: Mouse required, joysticks optional

Price: £35.99 **Release Date:** Out now

Publisher: SSI (US Gold) **Tel:** (021) 625 3388

Demon takes on Berserker. The Demon should win – it's ugly, breathes fire, doesn't cut its nails and has a tendency to stomp. The Berserker has stamina, though, and stands a good chance while the Demon persists in facing the wrong way... Clever it's not.

Not a bad bloody bargain

All in all, SSI has a winner here. Unlike board game conversions with animation thrown in to excite interest, *Dark Legions* is a smooth blend of strategy and action right from the start. The gridded movement isn't as restrictive as it sounds, especially as the terrain is so varied, and the arcade-style combat element means you're in complete control. On top of that, the superb animations and sounds make it an unmissable gaming experience. Bring me my orb – I want more blood! PZ

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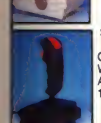

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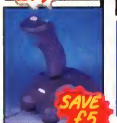

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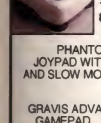

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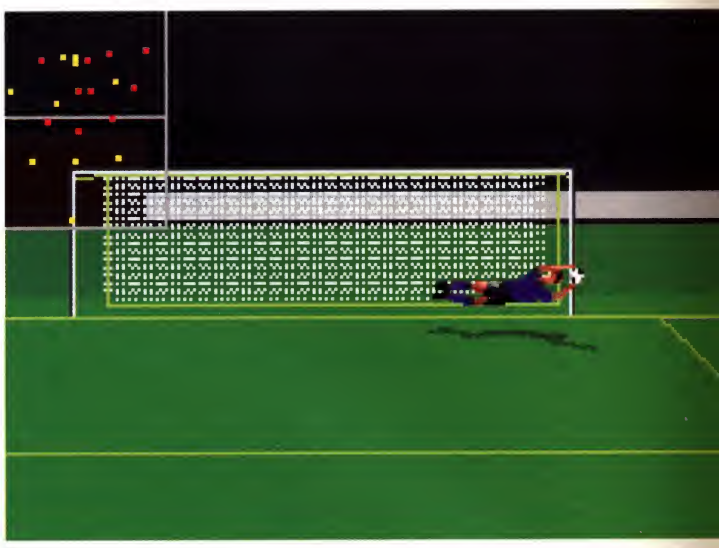
PLANET FOOTBALL



Fact: The French make weird games. Fact: Planet Football is a French game. Hypothesis: Planet Football will prove itself to be a weird football game. Patrick McCarthy checks the theory.

PLANET FOOTBALL is an attempt to produce the Holy Grail of football games, by successfully combining intriguing management depth and playable arcade action in the same game. It's been tried before with the early *Manchester United* games, and with *Player Manager* on the Amiga, which incorporated the action elements of *Kick Off* and tacked some management options on top. This was an attempt to cover everything a football fan could wish for in a game (apart from the chance to pick off the opposition with a rifle from the back of the stands). None of the attempts was totally successful – if they were, we'd still be playing them.

"Unfortunately about the only weird thing about this game is the viewing angle.

Like every other football game this summer, *Planet Football* is based on the World Cup, so it only provides national teams. The management side of things is limited as a result: only a few games to play in the competition proper, no contract negotiations and no transfers. It scores over the likes of *World Cup Challenge* by having an arcade section, where you can play the games as well as take all the managerial decisions. If you have the hand-eye co-ordination of a pickled egg, you can choose to just manage the team.

Déjà vu

Familiarly, for anyone who's seen anything of any of the other 400 World Cup games to emerge this year, the 24 legitimate qualifiers have been supplemented with eight other non-qualifiers. Once again, for those who are still having problems coming to terms with the fact that their national team is crap, custom competitions can be created. And as usual, there are one-off friendly games as well as the World Cup proper to play. You can pick your opponent's team in friendlies. Game time can be adjusted from five to 25 minutes real time. There's also a 'training mode', which supposedly allows you to practise in-game essentials like set pieces, headers, overhead kicks, diving for penalties, spitting, and blowing your nose on your hand. Actually, it's just a normal game with no opponents.

Clever clogs

The players have supposedly been programmed to react both to the position of the ball and that of other players, in an attempt to eliminate *Sensi*-style Player Behind Goal Alerts and improve the movement off the ball of attacking players. Additionally, their behaviour is modified by the approach you select – attacking, defensive or a mix of the two. In practice, players don't seem any less stupid than

(Top right) The wind was so strong little Andoni had to glue his gloves to the post to guard his goal. (Above right) Yes okay, you know it's the options screen – what do you want, a biscuit?

(Left) There's also a 'training' mode which allows you to practise in-game essentials like set pieces and blowing your nose on your hand. Actually, it's just a normal game with no opponents.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Oo-er, missus, this one's well down the league table and dangerously close to the relegation zone.

World Cup USA '94

Sensible Soccer

FIFA Soccer

Planet Football

Striker

they are in most other games, and can still be spotted playing 'statues' while a forward bears down on them. Luckily, they're clever enough to dive in and clatter him skywards when you tell them to. (Although, it being a World Cup, they're liable to face life imprisonment in a labour camp for their efforts.)

But is it weird?

Unfortunately for lovers of generalisation, about the only weird thing about it is the viewing angle. Similar low-down, close to the action views have been used before – most notably in *MicroProse Soccer* and the accurately-titled Italian effort *I Play 3D Soccer* – and this suffers from a similar fault. It's too close to the action, so that anyone playing down-screen (or more accurately, out of the screen) can only see about two yards in front of the player with the ball. There's a scanner that can be adjusted between three different sizes, but who uses a scanner in the heat of a match? It's a football game, not a stealth bomber simulation. There's always the option to play both halves in the same direction – but this ignores the fact that even when playing up-screen you need to see ahead of an opposing attacker as well to know where your defenders are. And it doesn't really help in a two-player game, either.

Management game?

As far as its pretensions to management go, let's just say it doesn't have the depth we'd like. The options for 'managing' your team consist of selecting one of five formations and three playing styles. That's it. Hold me back before I waste my entire life by burying myself in its intricacies. What seems strange is that the teams clearly haven't even been researched: the England team has Paul Ince listed as a central defender and Gary Pallister as a midfielder.

But it plays...

Once you get into it, and get used to the peculiar scaling of the players and the fact that you can't see in one direction at all, it plays reasonably, if you don't mind having the ball stick to your feet like food to a programmer's beard. *(That's known as a qualified sentence, I believe. Ed.)* At least it helps when one player has to use the keyboard, anyway. Overall, it seems as if it's been rushed out. The promised training facilities, which supposedly were to have more depth and improve players' performance, aren't there; the management options are negligible and poorly implemented. As an arcade football game it has its faults, but then so does everything else on the PC. It's not one of the best, though. Z

Play one-off friendlies – as well as the World Cup proper – when you get to pick the opposing team.

Blimey O'Reilly Corner

The formation and team selection screens are where Planet Football gets seriously frustrating. It doesn't help that team formation and selection are done on two different screens, so you have to switch back and forth between the two.

Then there's the numbering system: out go centuries of tradition, in comes a crap new one. Number 2 is the left back, 3 and 4 the central defenders, 5 is the right back, and so on. Let's say you're using England and want to change Paul Parker with Rob Jones – perhaps because you prefer your passes forward to stay within the confines of the stadium. Clicking on their respective numbers swaps them over on the team list – but not on the formation screen. "Ah," you think, "maybe they're using the squad numbering system."

But no. If you look at the formation window, you can see that it still thinks that Paul Parker is still there. Thus, it's probably safe to assume that the system being used is 'none'.

Planet Soccer suffers from low views, too close to the action.

SCORE

The World Cup produced a rash of rush releases. This is not one of the best.

Minimum Memory: 4Mb RAM (3Mb XMS essential)
Minimum Processor: 386/33
Installation: Essential
Minimum Hard Disk Space: 20Mb
Graphics Modes Supported: VGA/MCGA
Sound Cards Supported: AdLib, Sound Blaster
Controls: Keyboard, Joystick, Mouse (essential)
Comments: DOS 5.0 or above required

Price: £39.99 Release Date: Out Now
Publisher: Infogrames **Tel:** 071-738 8199

"This has to be THE best two player game on the PC, and is a strong contender for the best PC action game of all time."
90% PC Games.

• The Bitmap Brothers •

THE CHAOS ENGINE

• TIME FOR CHAOS •

IBM PC screen shots shown.

C1, Metropolitan Wharf, Wapping Wall, London E1 9SS. © 1994 The Bitmap Brothers. Published by Renegade.

BATTLE

Battle Bugs is an insect-based strategy game; Patrick McCarthy has a morbid fear of insects and the intelligence of a pebble. We locked them in a room together for a laugh.

THE FIRST time I saw *Battle Bugs* I thought I was watching one of those nature programmes – except they weren't stripping the flesh from a living cameraman while his comrades filmed it, they were just standing about in funny outfits. One of the first things you have to do when you load it is learn to resist the temptation to keep stamping on the screen. You'll realise eventually that it harms the monitor rather than the insects, and that the insects are only pictures, but it might take a while. In the meantime, you might like to ponder exactly what it is about insects that makes them such victims. Is it their body language? That strange, hunched walk most of them seem to affect? Whatever it is, it makes one automatically raise the Boot Of Doom. Maybe it doesn't affect you personally in this way, but there are definitely two categories of life form – those that get stamped on, and those that don't. With most people, it's insects; with me, it's insects and small children.

Spontaneous missions

Put aside your boots, though, and come with me into the fascinating world of insect war. There are two ways to play the game. The one-player mode pits you against the wily old computer in a series of missions that generally come into one of two categories: taking over or defending certain items of food in the area, or beating the enemy forces into the dirt (the latter, you'll be pleased to learn, also helps considerably in the pursuit of the former). There's a time limit for you to achieve these goals. Usually it's quite a generous one – especially in my case: I found no trouble getting annihilated long before the time was up. It helps that you can stop the action at any point to give different orders to your insects, at which point the clock also stops. Instructions are made via a pop-up icon thingy, and include attacking a certain bug, defending a specified area, throwing an explosive device at somebody, and suchlike attractions.

Don't worry – you won't have to play the part of Joan Collins (in her most convincing role) faced by a 20ft ant.

You have three chances to crack each mission, after which, rather kindly, you're offered the option to skip it and go on to the next. After the first few tutorial missions, the difficulty level jumps about a bit – you might get a relatively easy one after a nightmare one – so if you're the kind of wuss who likes to cheat and move on, you won't necessarily find the next mission even harder. On the other hand, it may just be a matter of milliseconds before the segments start to fly.

Two-player fun

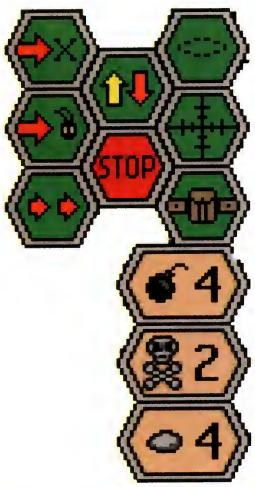
The two-player mode gives you exactly the same missions, but one of you takes the side of the computer's forces. This means, of course, that the one with the computer's gang usually has a slight advantage, computers being what they are

Orders are orders

The pop-up screens in full, clockwise from the left

- **Move to – picks a specific location; bug takes most direct route.**
- **Switches between aerial and ground travel for those who can.**
- **Adjust defence perimeter – attack first enemy to enter a given area.**
- **Move to bug – targets a specific insect for attacking.**
- **Throw bomb – er... throw bomb.**
- **Stop – stop.**
- **Custom path – choose the bug's route yourself.**
- **Attack – attack nearest bug, or follow a bug to the death.**

The lower three icons show contents of backpack.



SCORE

65

A battle game with bugs in it (as opposed to a bugged battle game).

Minimum Memory: 2Mb RAM
Minimum Processor: 386/33
Hard Disk Space Required: 8Mb
Graphics Modes Supported: VGA (SVGA recommended
Sound Cards Supported: AdLib, Sound Blaster
Controls: Mouse
Comments: DOS 5.0 or above, MS–Compatible mouse essential

Price: tba **Release Date:** September
Publisher: Dynamix **Tel:** 0734 303322

BUGS

The Battle Screen

❶ Exit level.

❷ Command TV – contains five 'channels' (four working and one joke), which you can switch between to see an overview of the battlefield; get information on the bug of your choice; save and load games; and activate an on-line help facility.

❸ The all-important time clock.

❹ Bomb detector button: allows you to see who among your enemy is carrying bombs.

❺ Status display of the selected bug.

❻ A cockroach.

❼ A slice of pizza.

(sneaky, conniving, cheating gits). It's played by sharing the same PC – in fact, you share the same mouse, taking it in turns to give orders. The time clock works in a different way in two-player mode: each player starts with a set amount of time, and has to click on the stopwatch before giving an order – the time then ticks down until orders are completed, the watch is clicked again, and your brave multi-legged boyos pile in once more. To introduce an element of handicapping, you can give different amounts of time to each player at the start of the game. (Or simply unplug the mouse when it's your opponent's go.)

There's rather too much trust involved in the two-player mode for my liking. You're supposed to look away while your opponent makes his moves, wait patiently while eight million orders are given, altered and generally fiddled with, and he's supposed to do the same for you. Unsurprisingly, this introduces more tension and unpleasantness than the game itself; it only takes an accusation of mouse-hoggery for fists to fly (or boots, if you're playing an insect chum). And who's to say the evil "I'm still setting orders" ploy won't

The status bar lets you see what each bug is capable of – and where your opponent's intimate areas are.

be used, where you set the action going, allowing an entire army to pound the casing off your opponent's favourite cockroach while they have their back turned in the belief that you're still giving orders. All in all, it's nice that they've tried to introduce a two-player option, but it's not all that successful.

Kick shell

Each insect type has a supply of energy, handily displayed in a bar, which allows it to leap about and kick people in their intimate areas and which runs out pretty quickly once their own intimate areas come in for similar punishment. Each also has specific attack and defend ratings, ranging from the Mike Tyson-like Rhinoceros Beetle and Praying Mantis to the Russell Grant-like Moth and Water Bug. Others have special skills – ants can throw bombs, Medic ants heal the injured and Commanders boost the performance of those around them by their very presence. It's sort of like having a six-legged Vera Lynn in the squad, but the singing isn't as disturbing.

Ideally, you should use these types skilfully and with consummate timing to rout the computer-controlled enemy; ☞

It might not rate alongside the Battle of Britain for all you flight sim fans, but ageing grasshoppers still fondly remember the Battle of the Ring Doughnuts, where many of their colleagues met a sticky end.

unfortunately, I usually found that they generally seem to have more insects, of better quality, than you do, and winning through is never easy. In case you can't hack it, the game comes with a solution to every mission, but sometimes even following the instructions I still found it difficult. That's probably partly because I'm crap, but partly it's to do with the nature of the battles. The forces of Them are usually stronger, so that those of Us have to adopt a particular strategy. Generally it involves taking out one of the more powerful opponents with two or more of your own. Timing can be so crucial to a mission, that if one of your insects arrives at a set point slightly too late, the whole thing falls apart. Although you can skip the mission that's causing you problems, most people will probably want to finish it before proceeding, and when you see that you can't do it even with the instructions, it makes you lose faith in the game.

Aside from this, it's also a very fiddly game to play. You have to click the right part of an insect to call up its instructions, and often have to click the instruction you want more than once before it registers. Then there's the general twee-ness of it all; the appallingly "cute" voice used to give you your orders at the start of a mission will have you choosing to enter the mission without instructions to save vomit collecting on your keyboard. And cartoony figures saluting when you give them orders, and "comically" hitting and stomping each other wear thin fairly quickly – I'd give it about three seconds. The constant need to click on the clock makes it a very stop-start affair, too.

Arcadey or light-hearted strategy games have been tried before with different degrees of success. I suppose my lack of enthusiasm is because I prefer my tactical scrapping to be more along the lines of *Cannon Fodder* or *Dune II* – fast and seamless. This might appeal more to the people who like full-blown strategy games, but who fancy using bees and spiders instead of helicopters and tanks – if there are such people. It's not that badly done, it's just not my bag (man).

There's a fly in my group

Well, actually, there isn't. But there's just about everything else. Typically, when playing against the computer, you'll find you have a variety of creepy-crawlies at your disposal, and the computer will have slightly more (to think we rely on these machines to look after the sick). Here are some of those available (there are 22 in all).

The bee

Bees are useful for long-range aerial attacks. Unlike in real life, they don't keel over dead after the first sting.

The stink bug

This unpleasant freak walks up to others and breaks wind, causing them unnecessary distress in open defiance of the Geneva Convention.

The water bug

It's a bug that walks on water. Handy for levels that have water in them.

The cockroach

Hides under the fridge, eating crap and coming out to crawl up your nose and into your ears in the night. I don't know what it does in the game, though.

The flea

Traditional, blood-sucking creature devised to entertain bored people, who burst them between their fingernails.

IN PERSPECTIVE

There aren't really any direct comparisons for *Battle Bugs* (surprising, really) but here are a few arcadey/strategyish things anyway.

Cannon Fodder

Dune II

Battle Isle 2

Battle Bugs

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Alien Legacy

PUBLISHER: Dynamix | PRICE: TBA

TELEPHONE: 0734 303322 | RELEASE DATE: imminent

In the face of an alien invasion in 2043, the UN sends you off in charge of a spaceship to seek new worlds and save the human race. Charlie Brooker finds out what it's like to play God and James T. Kirk all rolled into one.

(Above) The scene in your frighteningly Enterprise-style control room.

Looks aren't everything. Just ask Quasimodo. Some of the best things in life look pretty terrible when you first come across them. Think about a bowl of mushy Weetabix, all mashed up with milk and lashings of granulated sugar. It looks like a load of unappealing slop – whereas when you actually start eating it, it tastes like manna from Heaven (to me, at any rate).

I'm only mentioning this because when I first received the preview copy of *Alien Legacy*, I thought it looked a bit... well, dull.

A warm welcome just after you find yourself being revived in a Sigourney Weaver kind of way.

The graphics seemed a bit strange, ranging from the slightly impressive to the determinedly average. The last sci-fi related game I'd played was *TIE Fighter*, so *Alien Legacy*'s methodical pace and screens of text seemed like a mouthful of cold dog phlegm after that gigantic banquet of action-packed *canard en croute*.

Furthermore, being the impatient, 30-second attention-spanned goon that I am, I initially decided to skip the traditional manual-perusal ceremony and plough straight into the game unaided by such tiresome things as preparation, understanding, and a general clue as to just what the hell I was supposed to be doing.

Fools rush in

So, there I sat, hunched before the monitor, squinting at the screen and gingerly clicking the mouse like a curious chimpanzee that has just been handed a computer and is trying to work out which button dispenses the bananas.

Frustrated by my lack of knowledge, and egged on by a friend who was standing over me thirsty for a game with some action, I eventually admitted defeat and jumped back into the cold hard void that is Microsoft's Disk Operating System, ready to boot up *TIE Fighter* yet a-bloody-gain. The long and short of it was that I was dreading writing this preview.

Then I started getting curious. As I lay in bed, a few thoughts sprang to mind: Didn't I have the same problem with *Sim City* the first time I played it? And hadn't *Alien Legacy*'s install program warned me that I needed 21Mb of free hard disk space? There must be something big at work there. Mustn't there? And was I really the sort of sad sack who lies awake at night worrying about a computer game?

So, the following day, I did the right thing. I read the manual. I followed the tutorial. I thought hard about what I was doing. I got into it. And, verily, I saw that it was good.

> "There's heaps of stuff going on: planning, research, exploration and the all-important storyline."

Depth charge

The story behind *Alien Legacy* runs roughly as follows. Miraculously, the human race managed to make it into the 21st Century without blowing everything up with bombs. We'd even got round to exploring our solar system properly, establishing a few colonies out in the asteroid belts to create a little breathing room back here on our overpopulated planet (let's hope they sent Tory voters up first – we could quite happily do without them).

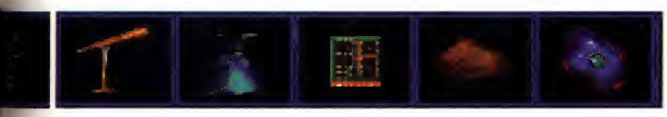
Unfortunately, being the brutal berks we are, we soon got caught up in our own little feuds and fights, and spent most of our time kicking each other's arses rather than continuing to delve deeper into space travel. Cuh! Typical.

Anyway, all this in-fighting would no doubt have continued until we brought about a *Planet of the Apes*-style ending for ourselves, had it not been for the events which occured in 2043, when a bunch of cheeky aliens from Alpha Centauri suddenly turned up and started dropping horrible viral weapons on us. Flesh-eating necro-stropocroppolis ahoy!

In a panic, we all came together as one *(steady – Ed.)* in order to save our inherently cowardly selves. The United Nations took control of the Earth, and top-notch scientists worked round the clock to invent new cool stuff for us to use against the Alien Bosch.

So there we were, constructing huge space battleships and laser beams and things. At the same time, as an insurance policy, we built gigantic "seedships" – immense star cruisers which held thousands of humans in suspended animation, designed to seek out faraway planets and colonise them, thereby ensuring the survival of the human race.

And guess what? You're in charge of one of them. The UNS Calypso, to be precise. At



the start of the game you've just been re-animated, orbiting a suitably inhabitable planet, light years away from Earth.

But then comes the twist. While you were asleep, your interstellar answerphone continued to receive messages from the United Nations back on Earth. When you come to, you discover that 17 years after you departed, the UN launched another seedship, the Tantalus, on course for the same solar system as you. And because technology had progressed while you were snoozing in your cryogenic chamber, the Tantalus' engines were more efficient than yours, so it should have arrived some 21 years ahead of you, and begun building colonies ready for your arrival.

So where is it? Who knows? It's all quite eerie. And you can't get on the phone to Earth because Earth isn't there any more. The final transmission from the UN consisted mainly of shouts and screams. It's time to stare into space, gulp a little and realise that you are truly on your own.

Only you can save mankind

There's so much going on in *Alien Legacy* that it's hard to know where to start. There's *Sim City*-style colony building, *Star Control*-style exploration (both of planet surfaces and space itself), *Civilization*-like research (you need to develop new technologies constantly), and a nice *Twilight Zone*-esque plot as you search for clues on the fate of the Tantalus, and the rest of the human race. Put this together with the resource-management of *Dune 2 (Yeah, okay Charlie, so you've got a big game collection! – Ed)*, and you've got some idea of how big and varied this game is.

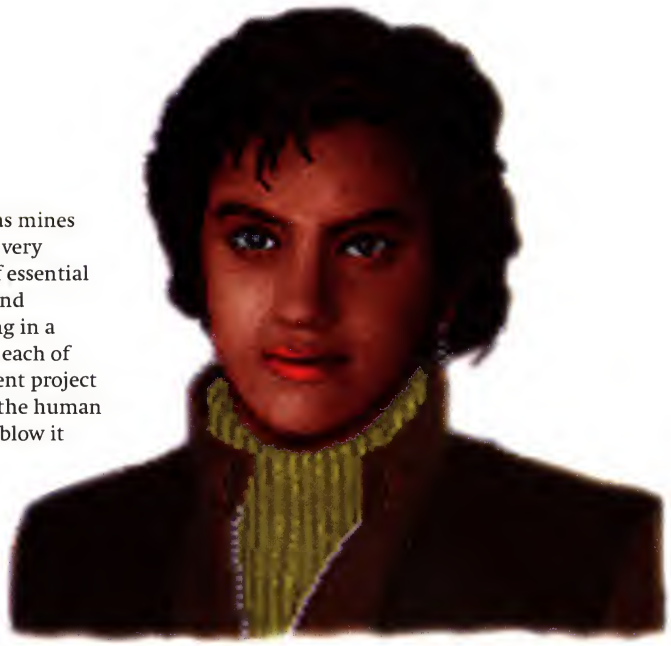
Luckily, you're provided with a Personal Data Assistant, or PDA, which contains oodles of information about this, that and the other, and records all the important information as you uncover it. You've also got a team of advisors, each of whom will nag you constantly and help point you in the right direction. Everything is controlled by a simple point-and-click mouse-and-menu interface which soon becomes second nature.

Let's break the game down and pick the various elements apart shall we? It should give you at least some idea of how much is going on here.

Colonies

Your main objective as the captain of the Calypso is to ensure the survival of the human species. So, hey, you'd better build some places to live.

Initially, you'll need little more than a few living quarters, a power station and a factory. Factories are crucial to your survival, since they can both act as mines (natural resources become scarce very quickly), and as manufacturers of essential items such as robots, spacecraft and weaponry. You'll also want to bung in a few research labs here and there, each of which can be assigned to a different project – from new medicines to protect the human body, to designing new bombs to blow it to pieces.

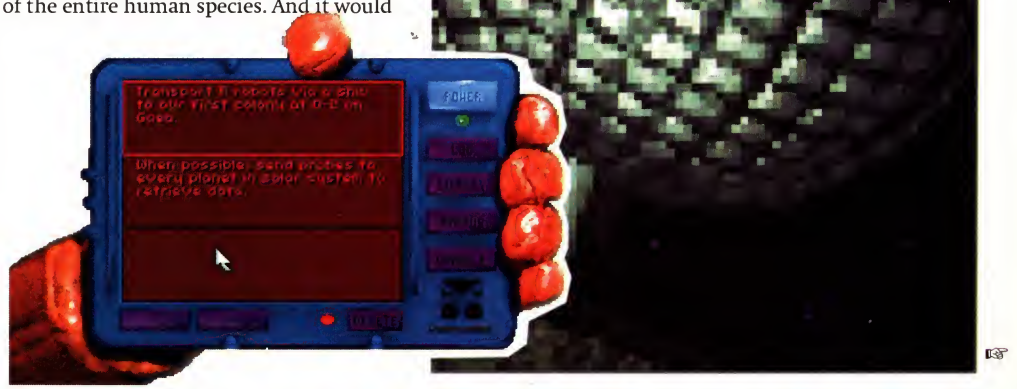


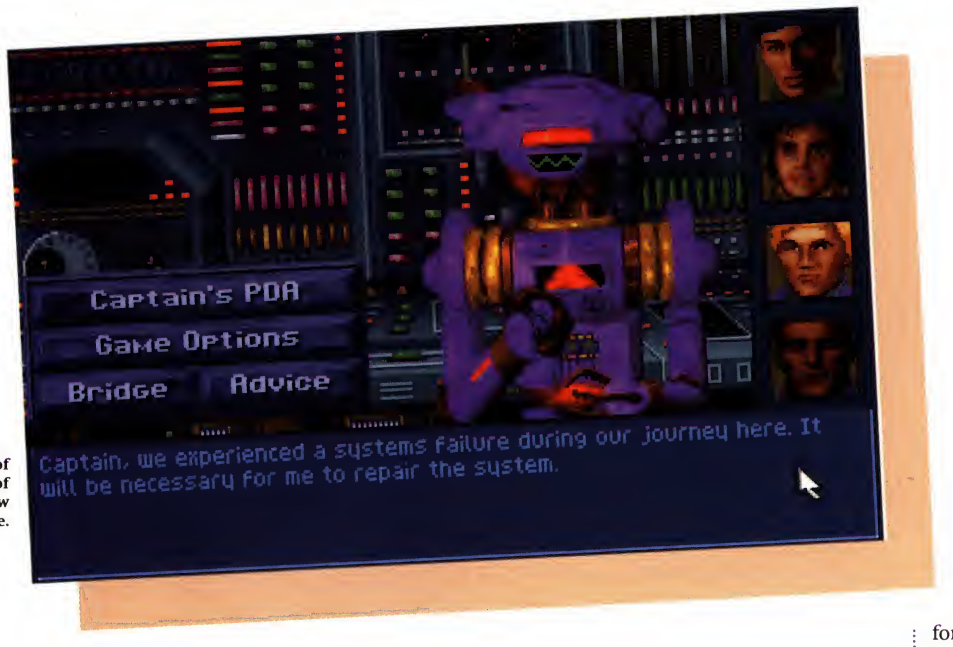
Building colonies is fairly simple: send a craft down to the planet's surface, find a suitable location and get some robots to lay down the foundations. If you've got enough building materials you can start straightaway by simply selecting the type of building you want, and placing it down with the mouse.

The tricky part is keeping a colony going. Not only will a lack of just one type of resource cause the whole thing to break down, you may also find yourself coming under attack from hostile natives (my first base was attacked by a giant fungus), or dealing with a revolution from within your own base.

As you progress, you'll have to manage many of these colonies, often on different planets, all at the same time. Resources will often have to be shuttled from base to base – for example, a colony built on a gigantic mountain of tin, for instance, will be able to manufacture as many Tonka toys as it wants, but may have trouble finding sources of energy. So you'll want to exchange some of that tin with your base in the middle of that big forest, which is surrounded by energy-providing trees but hasn't got enough tin to make a ringpull, let alone a new power station.

This means that should you neglect just one of your bases, the whole self-sustaining environment could come crashing down around your ears, causing the extinction of the entire human species. And it would





You can keep track of everything with the help of your handy PDA, and a few robots, of course.

all be your fault, just because you weren't paying enough attention. Doh!

Exploration

There's not much point in travelling all that distance from Earth and then deciding to settle on just one measly planet now, is there? There are loads of planets and asteroids all around you – use 'em, you idiot. Another of your main tasks is to explore, and learn from what you discover.

You start the game with four space vehicles, piloted by robots, which can be used for a variety of purposes. There's the shuttling back and forth of resources and crew for one, which is essential, but more excitingly, they can also be used for deep space travel, and planet surface exploration missions.

Using the handy solar system map – which is an impressive 3D model which you can spin around and zoom in and out on – you can choose a planet which looks interesting and designate a ship to travel there (provided it has enough fuel to do so). Your probes can then uncover its vital statistics – so you can tell whether it's habitable or not.

Next, you send a craft down for surface exploration. Here you get to pilot your ship across a fractally-generated landscape and collect resources, discover things (any new phenomena you discover provides your scientific research teams with both ideas and knowledge which can be put to good use when inventing equipment), and generally have a good nose around. It's always a peaceful affair, however, so your craft is also equipped with laser beams and bloody great big bombs in case anything nasty rears its head.

This whole segment is very similar in concept to the planet exploration sequences in *Star Control 2*, except here it's all in 3D, and there are more interesting things to find.

Your ships must also establish space stations. These are absolutely critical to your success, since not only can each one hold its own colony, but it also acts as a handy Granada motorway service station in space, allowing your exploratory craft probing the outer reaches of the solar system a chance to refuel and rest. Unlike motorway service stations, however, they don't have any of those horrible plastic tree-houses for the kids outside, and there's no sign of those racks of £1.99 tapes of Val Doonican or James Last. Which can only be a good thing.

Oh yes, and while you're about it, why not come over all Nancy Drew and start looking around the solar system for some clues? You want to know what happened to that other ship, don't you? Especially if it was something nasty. Best to know what's going on, eh?

Research

If there's one thing we humans are good at, apart from wrecking things and starting religions, it's inventing stuff which makes our lives easier. From the wheel to the remote control unit, everything we've ever made is designed to appeal to our lazy, slob-like instincts. It's only natural that you should want to rustle up some new gadgets to aid your survival in space, and in *Alien Legacy* you do this with help from your scientific research team.

The Technology Manager screen enables you to decide which kind of projects your people should be working on; from electronic devices to biological engineering. Success depends largely on how much new knowledge you can acquire during your sojourns around the planets. Discovering a new type of plant life, for instance, could enable your biologists to produce a life-saving serum.

The beauty of researching and constructing is that you, as a player, really feel like you're getting somewhere – and since new technology depends on the gathering of knowledge, it makes you want to get out there and really e-x-p-l-o-r-e.

The bigger, the better

Like I said, there's a whole heap of stuff going on here: planning, management, research, exploration, and last, but by no means least, that all-important element – a storyline. I wish I'd had more time to play with the preview copy I was given, but then again I'd probably only have spoiled it all for you by revealing what happens next. So find out for yourselves.

Alien Legacy seems like the type of game you can really get stuck into, in a lonely, self-fulfilling but ultimately slightly sad sort of way. There's always something requiring your attention, as you juggle resources and build new facilities, and there's always something around the corner for you to discover, as you feel your way out into the further reaches of space. The amount of detail is quite phenomenal.

It may not look as pretty as say, *Theme Park*, but if it's a thoughtful blend of strategy and mystery you're after, then *Alien Legacy* looks as if it could be a fair bet. Let's just hope that developer Dynamix tidies up a few of the ropier elements which initially put me off the game slightly (such as the none-too-well-drawn main bridge and the jerky cinematic intro), so that similarly-minded buffoons won't have any reservations about diving in and playing the thing to death. ZZ

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PC ZONE

CD-ROM reviews

There are more games than ever before being produced either initially or only for CD-ROM these days and barely a major disk-based release goes by without a CD conversion following. The next 5 pages are devoted to the best the new medium has to offer, and as you'll see, the best is very good indeed.

THE GAMES in this section are subject to the same marking system as the disk-based games we review. You'll find a guide to our marks on page 41.

Games that score between 80 and 89 per cent receive our Recommended award. Games that fall into this category are likely to appeal to you if you have a liking for that particular genre.

Games scoring over 90 per cent are Classics. They redefine the state-of-the-art in computer games and most game players will thoroughly enjoy them regardless of their genre.

Naturally, the In Perspective and Tech Specs boxes work in the same way, but there are some other factors that you will need to take into account when purchasing CD-ROM games.

Drive Speed: Not all CD-ROM drives perform equally well, but generally they can be divided into types according to the sustained access speed. Older games will work quite happily on any drive, but most newer games will need a double-speed drive to function well, and as the year goes on some games will appear which demand triple-speed drives. To avoid disappointment, you should check that your drive speed is sufficient for the game you are about to buy.

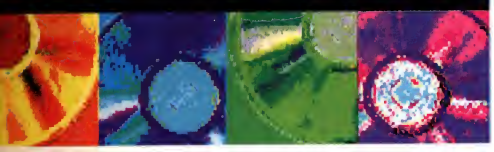
Windows: Because Windows is an integral part of multimedia systems, many multimedia games are designed to run in this environment. Although most modern PCs are supplied with Windows, not all PCs are capable of running Windows very efficiently. You may find that some games run very slowly when running under Windows unless you have a Windows graphics accelerator. You can speed up Windows graphics operation by adding more memory, which you should allocate as Extended rather than Expanded memory and setting up a large permanent virtual memory space on your hard drive. You should not attempt to run other Windows applications concurrently with games as this will severely degrade their performance. Finally, running Windows in enhanced mode will help to get your multimedia games up to speed.

MPC levels: True multimedia games may need to be run on a machine meeting a certain MPC level. Most multimedia games demand MPC level 2. As a rough guide, this is what's needed to meet MPC level 2: double-speed CD drive, 80386 33Mhz PC, 16-bit sound card, SVGA card and monitor, and *Windows 3.1*.☞

WHAT'S IN OUR DISK CADDIES?

Some games get played, reviewed and then lost. Others hang around a lot longer. This is what's currently monopolising our CD drive. Not necessarily the best games around, but the ones we keep coming back to.

- Under A Killing Moon
- UFO
- International Tennis Open
- Outpost
- Litil Divil



Under A Killing Moon

Has the interactive movie finally become a reality? Do Hollywood stars look just as good in pixels? Warren Chrismas has been interacting like crazy with the greatly anticipated new "movie" from Access, and thinks he has the answers.

IT'S HOT, sticky and the relentless drizzle outside doesn't look as if it's ever going to stop. The windows are shut and badly steamed and the world outside seems a long, long way away. The Boss leans back on his chair, and draws heavily on his big fat cigar. He'd normally blow circles but he has other things on his mind, like the package on the desk in front of him.

"God damn it, we've gotta run with this thing," he murmurs. "But there are only three days to go 'til deadline and it ain't ready."

Coo, that's clever – not only can you walk around freely in each location, you can look up and down and zoom in and out.

"We can't... we just can't do it, Boss," I reply. The others shake their heads in agreement. "Sure, but if we don't act fast, this thing's gonna be on the streets before we know what's hit us. We've got a duty to the public, let's roll with it."

And so it came to pass that the next three days of this reviewer's life would revolve around that package on the desk.

Yep, *Under A Killing Moon* did indeed arrive just before our going-to-press deadline. Unfortunately our review copy is not the final version. The game is finished: the graphics, sound and music are

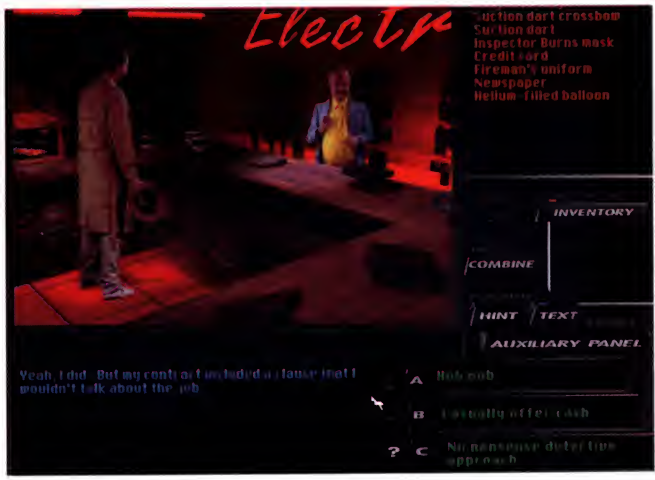
there, and the gameplay is just about what you can expect when the product ships, but with just a slight problem. Actually a rather major one, but more on that later.

US Gold is describing *Under A Killing Moon* as an "interactive movie", but wait; don't turn that page just yet. This really is a game which comes close, if not matches, that description. You play long-time unemployed private investigator Tex Murphy, a side of your personality you may well remember from previous releases *Mean Streets* and *Martian Memorandum*. You're a '50s-style American cop locked in the 21st century – 2045 to be exact. An unpredictable scenario spoilt a little by the fact that the world (yawn, yawn) has been devastated by a nuclear holocaust and is filled with normal humans and mutants. It wouldn't be fair to give too much of the plot away as it would be like describing the storyline to a real

> "This really is a game which comes close to, if not matches, the description 'interactive movie'."

movie before you've had chance to see it. Suffice it to say that as Tex Murphy, you're dragged back into action my the mysterious reappearance of the Colonel (Brian Keith) – *the* detective – who was once your mentor. Thing is, he lost his licence because of you. What's he doing back? The tasks, and sub-tasks, involved become apparent as you go along: solve a burglary, find a missing statuette, free the captured girlie, save the Earth. All in a day's work... Well six, actually.

The game features a handful of (semi-) famous American stars who you may well recognise, even if you can't actually put names to the faces. Aside from Brian Keith, there's Margot Kidder, Russell



Means plus the voice of James Earl Jones – ring any bells? It seems strange that they've used actors from an older generation, although, having said that, there are a few bimbo-type characters included among the rest of the 25-strong cast to satisfy the twitching right hand of your average teenage male games player. The lead role is taken by Chris Jones, vice-president of Access, the development team. He also co-designed and directed the game. A giant ego trip? Actually his acting, and that of the rest of the cast, is very good. Seeing "real" humans in computer games, however, already seems a little old hat, and despite the fact that the video overlaying has been done very well (the only down side being that only one character moves at a time) the acted scenes aren't the most impressive part of *Under A Killing Moon*. The best feature is undoubtedly the main 3D environment, which is so special that it's difficult to draw direct comparisons with other games. It's certainly not like that other "interactive movie", *7th Guest*, where you wander along set paths in each room.

With *Under A Killing Moon* there's a cinematic mode which allows you to wander into every nook and cranny of each of the 30 or so 3D locations using a mouse. Use the cursor keys as well and you can look up or down and zoom in and out, peering into drawers, over ledges, up at ceilings and so on, and all this created in real-time.

The digitised characters are present as you walk around and they even appear animated, albeit slightly. Stop to talk to them, though, and you switch to full(-ish) screen sequences. It all ties in very nicely. What's more, you can stop the movement when you want then change to clue-seek mode where you interact (no, really) with the environment by examining and picking up objects. Wow! Of course, in this sense, the game is more like a traditional adventure, as you'll spend a lot of time moving the cursor around the screen examining anything that seems unusual, and "just in

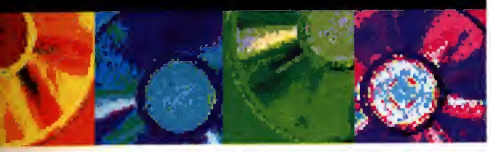
Of all the gin joints in all the world...

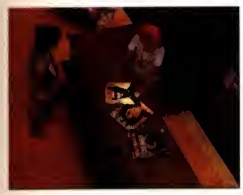
Most of the places shown on the map are split into sub-locations. Thanks to your 'car', you can fly between them easily.

(Left) A '50s-style cop who ends up in space? Don't ask, just don't ask.

(Right) See him on the left, that's you, that is. Tex, sadly, is a bit of a wimp.

Under A Killing Moon





View to a kill – the cut-sequences (above) are rather excellent.

case", anything which appears quite ordinary. Manipulating certain objects can trigger an entertaining cut-sequence. Once found, you need to examine the collected items, combine them, offer them to characters and generally do the same as you would in any traditional two-dimensional graphic adventure. The real beauty is that when you go back to movement mode, the 3D environment updates like you'd expect it to. Objects disappear when you've picked them up for example. 3D interaction? You bet your arse.

As for the gameplay, well the puzzles are standard fare. You'll need to use certain objects at certain locations at certain times, and displace objects to reveal secrets. Move the shield and it reveals a switch, flick the switch and it turns off the laser beam – you know the sort of thing. Points are gained for getting things right. Hints are available, although using these will cost you marks. Sound familiar? While the interactive movie tag may, to some, still seem a little over the top, there's no doubting that this game is a step forward, and at the very least, a ground-breaking 3D adventure. Once playing, it's very easy to take for granted things that simply weren't possible two or three years ago: features like the spoken description of every object in every location, the movie-style sound track and the digitised actors.

Unfortunately one side of the interaction that Access hasn't been able to improve upon is the actual conversations with the other characters. It's still the age-old multiple choice format and, sadly, if the conversation doesn't go the way you want it, you need to simply start it over. This grinds after a while, especially as you're not shown what you're going to say, just the style: "humorous", "threatening" or whatever, and the fact that some conversations are simply dead-ends. Guesswork and perseverance are something you'll need to rely on. It's not surprising that Access claims there's 50-60 hours' worth of gameplay in here – the minutes soon tick by trying to get the right information. But that's really a fairly minor criticism, and ignoring the fact that the plot, especially the jokes, are geared towards Americans, this is a first-class production. Besides, you're going to have to get used to the latter, with these mega-budget productions.

So why haven't we marked it? Well, basically, although we're not entirely happy with what we've got to to review, by time you read this the game should be in the shops. We figured you'd want to know whether it was worth buying or not, especially as the asking price is not cheap. What we're not happy about is the fact that our review copy requires a massive 16Mb of RAM, whereas US Gold is promising the released product is only going to need 4Mb. Obviously, this could have a significant effect on the performance. As it stands the game is a little sluggish on the 16Mb 486 used for testing – a new location takes around 20 seconds to load, and the moving around in 3D mode is a one-way ticket to Flickertown Central. A warning was given on installation that the video card was too slow, but it's an Orchid Fahrenheit so what's it going to be like with a Trident? Admittedly, there is an option to change the size of the viewing window in the game, but if you need a Pentium and a super-charged (DOS) graphics accelerator to get maximum picture size and a decent frame rate, I'll be disappointed. Tune in next month for an update and a rating based on the final product. Those of you with a ninja PC, should get down the shops immediately.

How many?

Thanks to over 3.5 hours of video footage, *Under A Killing Moon* comes on four CDs. Yes, you read that right – four CDs. Thankfully, Access has been clever enough to duplicate the important stuff, like the graphics data for your office, across all of the discs, therefore minimising the number of times you need to swap them over. Those with more than one CD-ROM drive, or a multi-disc unit, can tailor the set-up accordingly. In fact when you install the game, you'll find yourself in options city.

Way-hey! There are lots of pretty young girls in this game. And Margot Kidder.

SCORE

Pigs can fly. Interactive movies do exist. Sort of.

Minimum Memory: tba
Minimum Processor: 386/25 (486/33 recommended)
Hard Disk Space Required: 1Mb
Graphics Modes Supported: VGA, SVGA
Sound Cards Supported: Most, but not yet finalised
Controls: Keyboard with mouse
Price: £59.95 **Release Date:** Early September
Publisher: US Gold **Tel:** 021-625 3388

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Average street price	£499	£479	£479	£489	£449
Maximum resolution in dots per inch	400 x 400	300 x 300	300 x 300	300 x 300	300 x 300
Windows 3.1 driver @ 400 dpi	YES	-	-	-	-
Amiga driver @ 400dpi available	YES	-	-	-	-
Print speed	6ppm	6ppm	4ppm	4ppm	6ppm
Straight paper path for all media	YES	-	-	-	-
PCL 5 printer command language	YES	YES	YES	YES	-
Resolution improvement/enhancement	YES	YES	YES	YES	-
Standard RAM	2Mb	1Mb	1Mb	1Mb	0.5Mb
Full A4 page graphics @ 300dpi with standard RAM	YES	YES	YES	-	-
Full A4 page text @ 400dpi with standard RAM	YES	-	-	-	-
Warm up time	<45 secs	<90 secs	<34 secs	<15 secs	<35 secs
First page of text output	<15 secs	<20 secs	<34 secs	<34 secs	<19 secs
Layout document description language included	YES	-	-	-	-
Flash ROM	YES	-	-	-	-
Flash ROM upgradeable firmware	YES	-	-	-	-
PCMCIA card slot	YES	-	-	-	-
Scaleable resident fonts - in HP LJ III emulation	8	13	26	8	-
Resident bit-mapped fonts	14	18	-	7	7
AGFA Intellifont scaleable font technology	YES	-	YES	YES	-
HP LaserJet III emulation included	YES	YES	YES	YES	-
EPSON FX emulation included	YES	YES	-	-	YES
IBM ProPrinter emulation included	YES	YES	-	-	-
Standard tray capacity	100	150	100	100	150
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Able to print on OHP film	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Able to print on 157gsm card (manual feed)	YES	-	-	-	YES
Printing - noise level	<48dB(A)	<50dB(A)	<48dB(A)	<46dB(A)	<45dB
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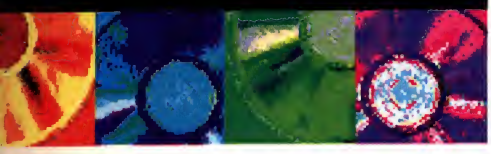
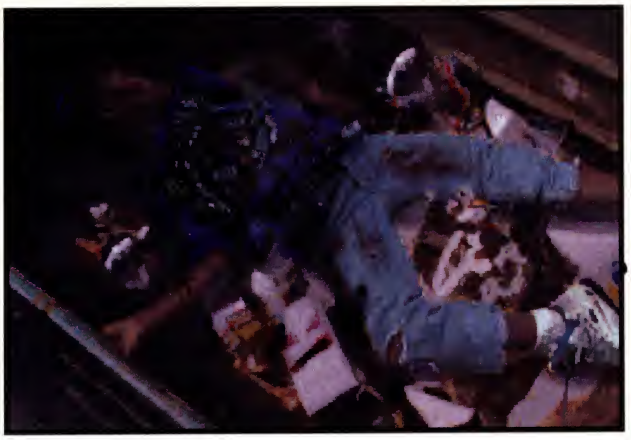




"Honey, the kid's broke." "Put him in the trash dear, we'll pick up a new one tomorrow." Human life in LA ain't worth a plug nickel.

Police Quest IV - Open Season

Being the law-abiding citizen that he is (*What?* Ed.), we thought Gareth Ramsay ideal for this review.

A few snapshots for the album. "Hey, Chester, get one of me and Sam."

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

OF ALL THE cities in all the world, I can't think of anywhere I would like to live less than Los Angeles. I once heard the statistics for murder there – something along the lines of more people killed in a month than are killed in five years in Britain! And they call it the "City of Angels", which is quite apt as tradition has it that you have to be deceased to become an Angel. To top this they built the city on a fault line which is destined to swallow the whole place – I'd rather live in Essex.

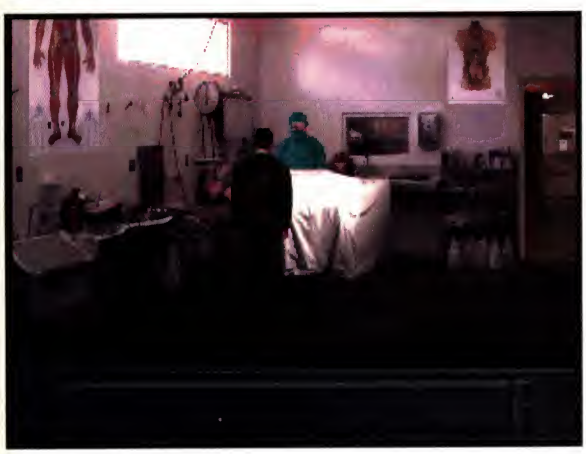
The plot

John Carey's your name, and you wear a badge – that of the LAPD. The body of your best buddy and fellow copper turns up at 3.00am in an alleyway, in one of the rougher districts of South LA. He's been tortured and mutilated, eyes glued shut and one of his fingers cut off. Brrrr! As lead investigator at the scene you have to find out who did it. As you do the usual police stuff – drawing a line around the body, searching for clues and interviewing on-lookers ("I ain't seen nuttin' man") – you take a look in a big wheelie bin and, blimey... another stiff. This time it's a young boy – shot to bits. Are they connected?

The plot thickens

Okay, so first things first. It's morning and you've now got *two* murders to solve. Where do you start? Grab some donuts and a coffee? No, everything's done by the book, so it's off to interview each of the deceased's relatives and the locals at the scene, and take a trip down the morgue to find out just what happened to your mate. Soon another tortured body turns up. It looks like you're dealing with a serial killer!

The morgue: at least you're not as cut up about your partner's death as he is.



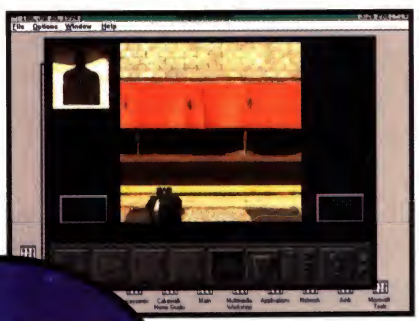
Life's a game...

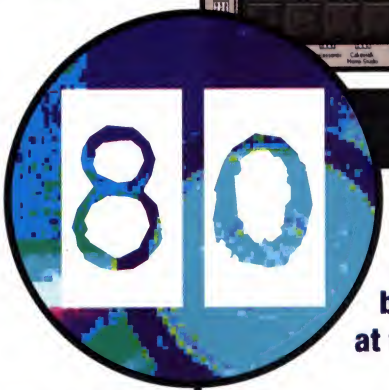
The game interface is typical of Sierra adventure games – walk, look, talk, touch and use icons, an inventory to store all of your finds and a control panel for game options. Notes must be taken at interviews and crime scenes and reports written and given to your partner.

Four stages represent Monday to Thursday, and progression to the next day requires everything that must be done having been done. Therefore, if you find yourself stuck you've obviously missed something of importance.

Hancock's half hour

I have to admit that I got quite hooked on *Police Quest IV*, and over a few long days, played it through to the bitter end (with much hair pulling as photo-realistic objects aren't often obvious against photo-realistic backgrounds). The game is rendered in SVGA photos of real locations, with digitised actors and full speech throughout. And Hancock's Half Hour? Well, right after getting the villain, the game crashed Aaagghhh! Why? When? How were they connected? A quick re-boot and a restored saved game – it doesn't crash, but... there never was a last page, just closing credits!



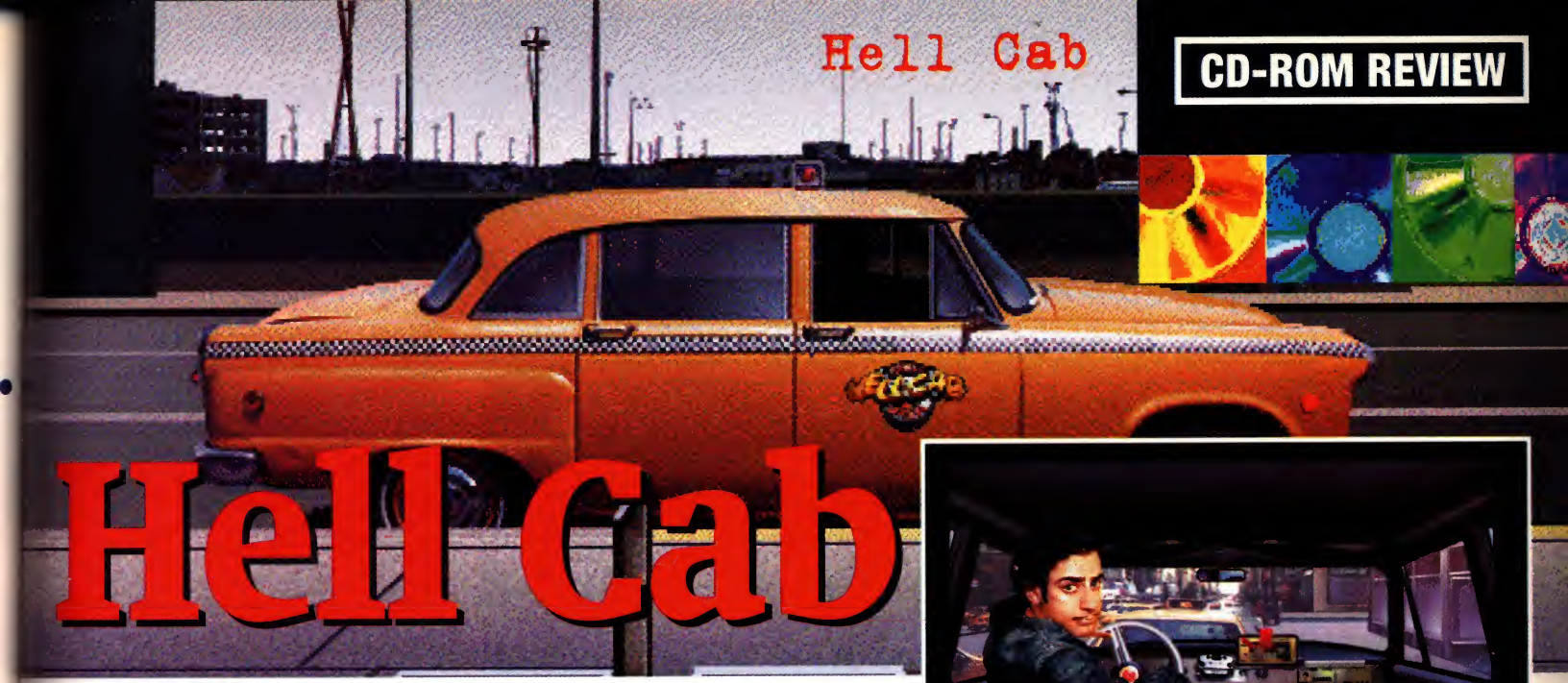


(Top right) Mel Gibson eat your heart out. One of the arcadey bits – your monthly firearms test.

SCORE

Atmospheric and very entertaining. A bit of a let down at the end, though.

Minimum Memory: 4Mb
Minimum Processor: 16MHz 386 or faster
Hard Disk Space Required: 20Mb
Graphics Modes Supported: VGA, SVGA
Sound Cards Supported: Cards with DAC
Controls: Mouse
Price: £44.99 **Release Date:** Out now
Publisher: Sierra Europe **Tel:** 0734 303171



Hell Cab

Chriss Anderson, in his black leather, black jeans, and black pointy boots (with obligatory buckles) is "the" die-hard goth, so he gets to review all games that, like him, are weird and scary....

(Above) Your not so friendly neighbourhood cabby.
(Right) Check out New York through these binoculars.

THE PLOT for *Hell Cab* could have come straight out of a Stephen King novel. You play the role of an unsuspecting tourist who jumps into a taxi in New York, only to discover that your host is no ordinary taxi driver. When he discovers you do not have enough money to pay your fare, he offers to make a deal with you. Giving it the old "Just sign here mate and you'll be alright", he hands you a contract which politely invites you to sign your soul over to the Devil in lieu of payment of your taxi fare. Being a tourist, you politely oblige and thus begins your nightmare taxi ride.

You have to find cash machines to pay your taxi fare. No pay, no play.

The taxi takes you on a journey through time, starting in New York and continuing on to ancient Rome, prehistoric times and even the trenches at Verdun, where you engage in hand-to-hand combat. Your first stop is the Empire State Building. Many of the hallways have curtains on the walls and when you open them (simply point and click) they show you a smart video clip. This is a neat little touch and is typical of the presentation of the game. All the graphic stills of the locations and digitised movie clips are highly impressive, but before you get excited, there is one tiny niggle I would like to point out. Yes, you guessed it, we're coming to the most important aspect of the game under consideration here: the gameplay.

Been there, seen it, done it

It's getting to the point where you could almost say you know exactly what to expect from an "interactive movie" masquerading as an adventure game on CD. We've had several of them already – *Critical Path, The Journeyman Project, Spaceship Warlock* etc. They all claim to offer the player a true cinematic experience on computer. To be fair, they're all visually impressive with excellent graphics and digitised movie clips, but, also, they all suffer from the same problem – limited gameplay. *Hell Cab* uses the same interface as the aforementioned games as well as the same playing style. What a surprise then that it has exactly the same problem. Rather than giving you challenging puzzles to solve, as is the case with most disk-based adventure games, *Hell Cab* sort of drags you along and points you in the direction of where you should be going and gives you spectacularly unsubtle hints as to what you should be doing.

Mini video clips like this one pop up everywhere.

Fight to the death in the Coliseum.

I suppose in this sense it is a bit like a movie in as much as you don't have to think very hard to play it, you just trundle along and watch the video clips. There are a few combat sequences to divert you (you get to fight a gladiator in Rome and have a scrap in the trenches of Verdun), but they're badly implemented and pay no more than a passing nod to anything approaching decent arcade action. *Hell Cab* is nice to look at but if you shell out fifty quid for it, you'll be well pissed off with what you get.

It's the same old story. Great graphics, but sadly lacking in gameplay.

Minimum Memory: 8Mb
Minimum Processor: 386DX 25
Hard Disk Space Required: 3Mb
Graphics Modes Supported: SVGA
Sound Cards Supported: Any Windows compatible sound card
Controls Supported: Mouse
Comments: Windows 3.1 required to run the game
Price: £49.99 **Release Date:** Out now
Publisher: Time Warner **Tel:** 0604 602800

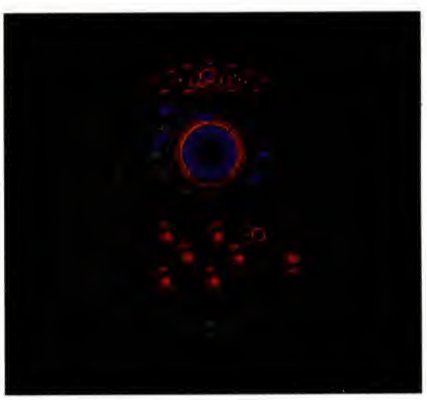
WIN! A MURDER Weekend for two

Dreamweb is destined to be one of the most original graphic adventures to be released this year. It utilises a unique bird's eye view of the action, is steeped in atmosphere, and it's out soon. To mark the occasion, Empire Software and PC Zone are giving our readers the opportunity to win a fantastic Break for Murder weekend for two. And for those who aren't lucky enough to bag the main prize, there's a second opportunity to win one of ten copies of the game.

Only one man is capable of saving the Dreamweb — Ryan, the reluctant assassin.

IMAGINE a sprawling American metropolis in the not too distant future. Although the world appears to be run by puppet governments controlled behind the scenes by multi-national corporations, there is an even more subtle and powerful force at work. It is the Dreamweb, the psychic ether that connects all people, good and evil. But now the strands of the Dreamweb have become unbalanced, and the forces of evil threaten to overrun the Dreamweb forever. One ordinary man, Ryan, is summoned by the guardians of the Dreamweb and told that he, and he alone, can restore the balance. To do so, he must assassinate seven key people; a bloody task that leads him into an inextricable web of intrigue and danger.

Dreamweb is a stunning adult graphic adventure, featuring over 4000 frames of animation, 200 rooms in 30 varied locations, hundreds of items, each of which can be manipulated, over 80 people to interact with, sampled music and sound



effects, and full speech on the CD-ROM version. It will be released mid-September.

In the mood for murder

To get you into the right frame of mind for playing and solving a graphic adventure with the complexity of *Dreamweb*, we are putting a Break for Murder weekend for two up for grabs.

In the convivial house party atmosphere of a comfortable Forte hotel, Break for Murder acts out the apparently perfect crime. Your presence is requested to play your part in the proceedings – as the weekend progresses you, the guests, call on your powers of detection to uncover the plot and discover the culprit.

A few weeks before the Murder weekend, you will receive details of the theme, allowing time to think about the plot, perhaps plan a costume for the fancy dress party, or assume an identity to be acted out when you meets your fellow guests.

When your weekend starts on Friday, you should keep your wits about you – there may be clues in every conversation. On Saturday, with the first murder accomplished, it is time to examine the evidence, question the suspects, draw your conclusions and look forward to the fancy dress dinner party.

Sunday morning sees the plot and the cast unmasked; will you be right or wrong?

The Break for Murder weekend includes:

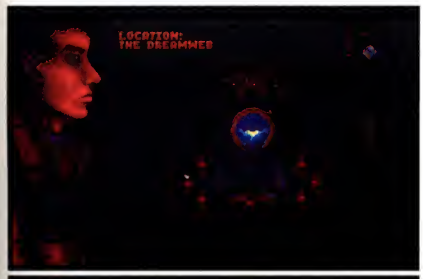
- Welcome reception;
- A Break for Murder programme, including competitions, games and 'murders' appropriate to each plot;
- Murder Weekend actors to provide all the entertainment and guide you through the murder plot;
- Two nights' accommodation sharing a twin or double room, or in a single room with private bathroom;
- Full traditional breakfast every morning;
- Three-course table d'hôte dinner with coffee each evening;
- Colour TV;
- Tea & coffee making facilities.

A mystery

To win the Break for Murder weekend for two, you must read this passage from the casebooks of the famous Sherlock Zone:

Extract from The Confusing Conundrum of the Missing Murderer

I had been called earlier that day to the



The first thing the intrepid Ryan must do is learn how to turn up the collar on his trenchcoat. After that, gathering clues from a variety of locations – such as Eden's flat – is a piece of piss.

grounds of Dunin House, a home for retired war veterans. Early that morning there had been a fire in the West wing. Fortunately it had been extinguished quickly, with the loss of a few furnishings in one room, and one fatality. But it was the loss of that life that had required my presence. For while the victim, Colonel Badlot, had died at approximately the time the fire was being fought, his death could not be attributed to the smoke and flames: he had clearly been strangled...

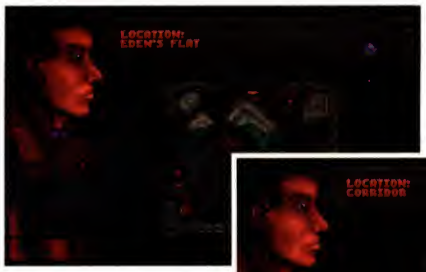
...By 3pm I had managed to eliminate all but three suspects from my enquiries: the charming, but stone deaf Coporal Coodbee; his room mate Sergeant Sedso, and the maid Miss Maibee. These were their statements.

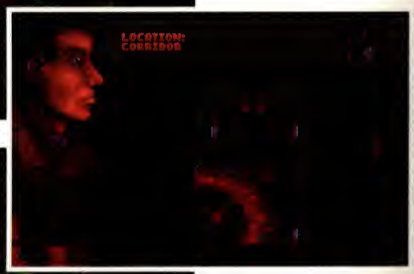
Miss Maibee:
It was about 7am and I was making my way to the room of Captain Herring, who is bed-ridden, with his breakfast. I just rounded the corner at the top of the stairs when I saw the shadowy figure of a man bent over another man. They were struggling. I screamed and dropped the tray. I was frozen to the spot, I was so scared, but neither of the two saw me, and I was able to slink away down the stairs where I fell into a faint. When I recovered, the body had already been discovered.

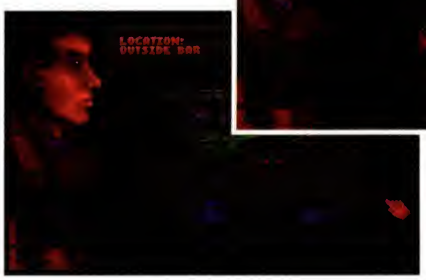
Corporal Coodbee:
I'd been asleep in my room, and I had just woken and was about to make my way down to breakfast when the fire began. So I left my room and made my way outside the building until the all clear was given. I didn't meet anybody or see anything strange until I had left the building, so I'm afraid I can't help you, Mr Zone.

Sergeant Sedso:
I had left Corporal Coodbee sleeping and started down to breakfast when I heard a crash and a scream. I was on my way to investigate when the fire started. The smoke and flames were fortunately confined to one room in the West wing and didn't extend to the East wing where our room is located. But I heard the alarm start ringing, so I realised there must be a fire somewhere and I left the building.

"Ah ha, I said, the murderer is ..."
Can you determine who the murderer is? If you can, complete the coupon below and send it in. The first correct entry drawn from the dock will win the Break for Murder weekend and a copy of *Dreamweb*. The next ten correct entries drawn from the hat will win a copy of the game.







Thirty locations, 200 rooms, 80 people to interactive with, hundreds of items – I'm a busy guy...

Murder Mystery

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Daytime Telephone Number: _____

The Murderer is:

Please tick here if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products. ☐

Send your entry to:
PC Zone Competition CPZ410B,
Bradley Pavilions,
Bradley Stoke North,
Bristol,
BS12 0BQ.

Entries must arrive not later than Wednesday 5th October.
Sorry! Prizewinner and guest must both be aged 18 or over.

(CPZ410B)

Rules

1) Employees of Dennis Publishing, Entertainment International, Break for Murder or associated companies caught entering this competition will find themselves playing the part of the luckless victim.
2) Entries received after the closing date of Wedenesday 5th October will not be considered as evidence.
3) The Editor's decision is final and anybody who argues will be read their rights.

WELL CONNECTED GAMES

Tired of those long nights by yourself with nobody to play with? Wish you could chainsaw your brother instead of an imp? Then let Simon Bradley and Steve Pritchard guide you through the intricacies of human interaction.

NETWORKING... Are we talking strange men with dodgy handshakes in smoke-filled rooms trying to further their careers? No!

Are we talking strange men hunched over smoke-filled PCs muttering unintelligible noises under their strained breath? Well, sort of....

Networking is one of those dry subjects which, unless you get off watching *Tomorrow's World* with your coffee on a copy of *New Scientist*, has all the horror of meeting a Cyber Demon in a darkened alleyway whilst armed with a chainsaw and none of the associated adrenaline rush. Not that it's boring or anything like that *(It isn't? – Ed.)*, it's just that as a conversational topic it's under-developed to say the least. But we're going to change all of that... Oh yes.

A misspent youth

One of our very earliest memories of video games, once we'd got over Space Invaders, was finding ourselves in an arcade somewhere near Leicester Square where we discovered a two-player tank game that required co-operative working to stay alive. Up until that point in our lives there is little doubt that nothing had come close to generating quite the same amount of excitement (sad or wot?).

Following the sad discovery that banging away at a keyboard by ourselves was nowhere near as much fun as banging away with someone else, we embarked on a quest for multi-player games, a quest which, as you will see, has all the makings of a Spielberg epic.

The best place to start is with Serial Links which, unless you are filthy rich and can afford the cost of a four-hour phone call, means you pack your PC into your car, grab a six pack (of low alcohol beer) and some crisps (Philius Fogg snacks if you're posh) and scoot on over to your mate's house where you'll find a spare bit of table, an extra chair, two glasses and some bowls. Now you start to interconnect (oo-err).

In the beginning there was *Flight Simulator 3* from Microsoft, allowing you to Serial Link yourself to your buddy and fly your Cessnas across the polygon wastes of the US of A. This was rapidly followed by *Falcon*, which gave you guns and missiles but was usually short and sweet, as opposed to the flying across America which tended towards long, drawn out and a bit on the naff side.

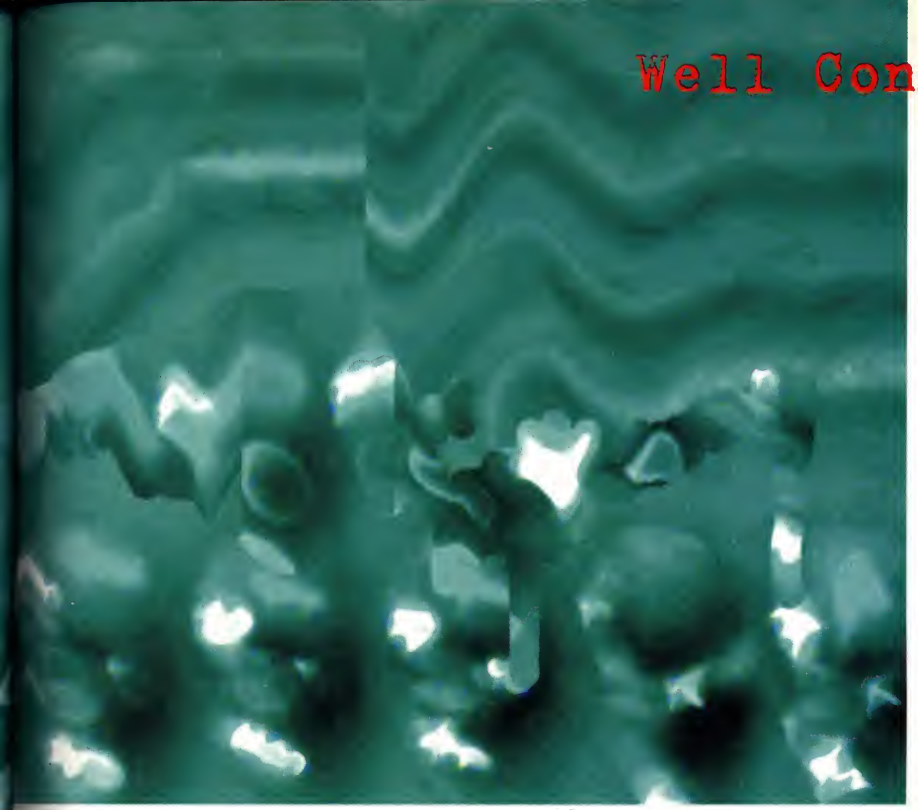
688 Attack Sub and *Populous* appeared, and these presented greater scope, challenge, and an element of strategy, something that had been missing in the earliest two-player games.

Well, *FS3* begot *FS4*, and nothing much changed over the next few years, other than the fact that Simon put on about two stone in weight. Then we discovered Novell networks and an interesting game called *Snipes* – a two-dimensional maze game in which you piloted a little creature around a maze shooting bad guys. This in itself was pretty boring, and the graphics were crap, but, and it's a very big but, you could play it with lots and lots of people. Suddenly an uninspiring, below-average game became immense fun, as we charged around a maze at high speed looking for our colleagues and zapping them. (It's amazing how the simple act of zapping your boss can really make coming to work worthwhile.)

What followed can be described at best as an orgy of shareware, because there were no software companies developing games specifically for networks, but lots of amateur bods with access to networks who recognised the potential for fun and frolics.

Then came the game that was to put networking firmly on the map of commercial software: *Falcon 3*. It was an inauspicious product as far as networks went, in that it was heralded primarily for its quality in the flight sim sense. But what it did auger was EBS or electronic battlefield, which in concept is a method by which lots of different sims designed to do so can operate together. That was a huge leap from the modest little shareware games that network fans had had to content themselves with up 'till then.

Syndicate, and more recently *Doom*, has proved that more and more companies are recognising that networks are not necessarily the domain of specialists, and are in fact available to the average punter willing to shell out a little extra money.



THE PC ZONE GUIDE TO DIY NETWORKS

WARNING: What follows is a concise, but fairly technical guide to setting up a network for multi-player games. If you're at all faint-hearted or have all the technical expertise of Mr Cursor, proceed no further. If you're adventurous, you carry on at your own risk – don't blame us if you end up with a pile of useless metal, silicon and wire.

So what is a network then?

In its simplest form, a network is a series of at least two PCs connected by cables and interface cards. The cards themselves are supported by software drivers which facilitate the communication. Effectively, what you end up with is the ability to communicate directly between PCs.

A serial link, which more game players are familiar with, is not by definition a network; just a piece of cable with lots of wires, better known as a 'null modem' cable. Serial links were the original connection, and even today a number of suppliers sell 'serial' networks, although these are fairly slow affairs. Serial games should not be underrated as by and large they are bags more fun than playing by yourself, especially if the game you're playing does not support true networking.

The main components of a network are:
Two or more PCs – preferably fast ones
A network card for each PC
Networking software for each PC to operate the card
Cabling to connect the PCs together
Loads of time and patience to get it all working

The future according to Bullfrog

One company which has consistently led the way on network-compatible games is Bullfrog. All of its games, from *Populous* onwards, have had some sort of two-player or multi-player capability. Peter Molyneux, Bullfrog's creative general, reckons that the future of PC gaming lies in network products as they are the closest that game players will get to Virtual Reality without having to put up with crappy graphics and zero gameplay.

"Network games are the way forward," Peter claims, "especially in the US where you can play down a modem using free local calls. There is nothing like competing against another person rather than the machine to spice up a game."

As a result, all Bullfrog games, from *Theme Park* to the forthcoming *Magic Carpet* and beyond, are, or will be, multi-player capable in one form or another. Bullfrog has already started the ball rolling in a big way with *Syndicate*, and there's plenty more where that came from.

The heartache

If you think that we're joking about strange men muttering arcane phrases in smoke-filled rooms, then think again. All of the men and women we know who have any real involvement in the bizarre world of networking will frequently be found muttering things like "IPX not loaded" or "Set yours to answer" or "Bastard hub's gone down again". The fact is that unless you are dedicated, strange or a network professional (which suggests both), you will find that networking games is not as easy as it sounds. Be prepared for many hours of searching for the cause to a conflict somewhere (bit like the UN), and never believe anyone who says it's easy.

Okay, having prepared you for the worst, let's finish on an upbeat note. If you do manage to get your network working, you're in for a treat. When you get to play *Doom*, *Falcon*, or *Syndicate*, directly against two or three friends, you'll know the hassle has been worthwhile. The only trouble is, you may never want to play another one-player game again!

☞

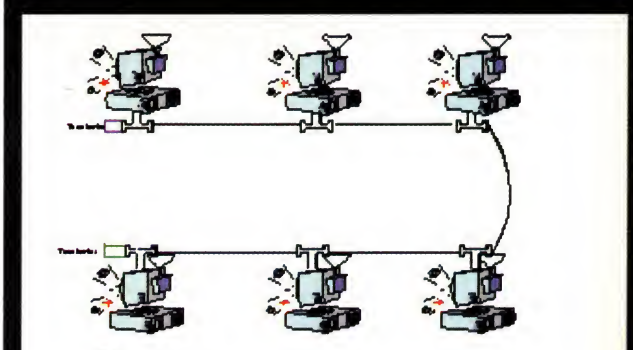
Cabling conundrum

The first decision you need to make is what type of cabling to use. This will depend on your needs and your budget. The two most common types of cabling are:

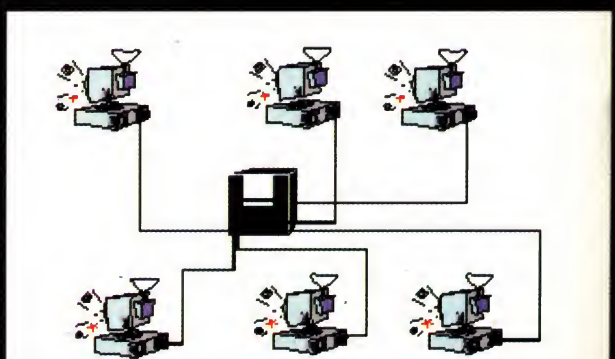
Copper: Taking the simplest (and cheapest) possible route to creating networked PCs would be to use copper cored coaxial cable or thinwire (just like the TV aerial stuff) and some 8-bit network cards, link the PCs together as shown in the diagram, not forgetting to use terminators at each end (these are known in the trade as Arnies, for obvious reasons). This will provide you with a quick and easy solution that can have as many or as few PCs as you have room on your coat rack for anoraks.

UTP –Twisted Pair: This type of network is connected using a flat cable, just like telephone cable only it isn't. It tends to lurk more in the realm of the professional user simply because of the higher costs involved.

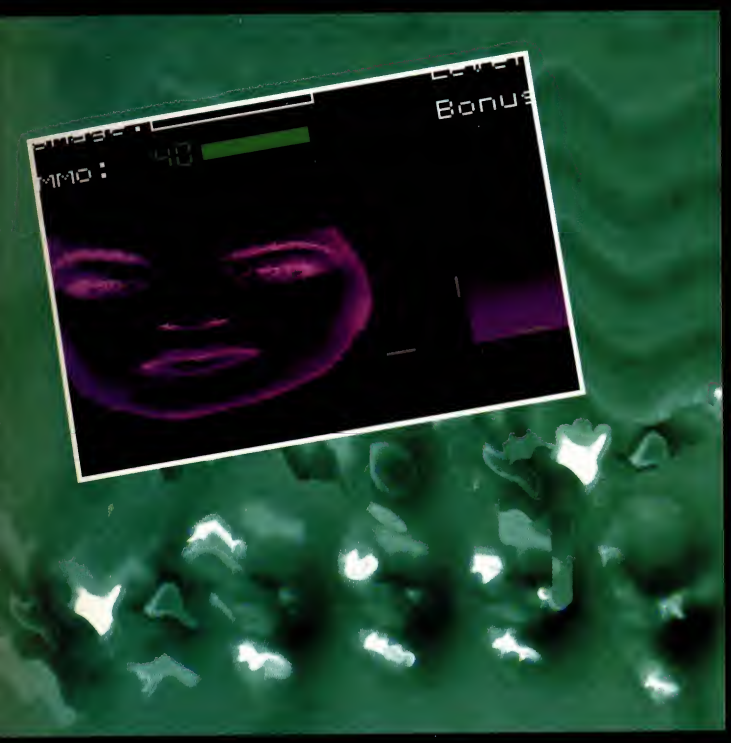
The heart of the network is quite appropriately called a hub. The hub is a communications processor and is specifically designed for handling huge amounts of network traffic at high speed. It has no disk, but loadsa processing power. The largest of these can handle 32 or more PCs simultaneously, and will cost you an arm and a leg. (see diagram below).



Sample Thinwire 'serverless' peer-to-peer network.



Hub-based UTP (twisted-pair) setup



So is that it?

Well, that depends on what you're trying to achieve. The majority of games that are networkable use a network language or protocol to communicate. These fall into two main categories: peer-to-peer communications and disk server-based.

A server is essentially a PC dedicated to managing disks and printers for use by all other PCs on the network. Typically, servers are stuffed with RAM and have a processor approaching the power of a water-cooled mainframe for those really intense periods when everybody is playing *Doom*. Whilst serving the other PCs, the server also moderates the network through various prioritisation methods.

Peer-to-peer means there is no server. It's more of a Socialist system: all PCs are equal, but some PCs are more equal than others. Each PC may perform some type of service for all of the others. Essentially, many games now use peer-to-peer communications through a protocol interface as this makes the minimum demands in terms of hardware and software support and is the easiest to configure. When you buy the network card you normally get a disk of software which enables you to build a set of executable drivers specifically for your card. The majority of games software uses the IPX communications protocol, and some network card software comes with a pre-generated IPX executable, which means that you just need to run it. If this is not the case, you need some client install disks from the network of your choice (normally Novell) and you'll have to run through a generation routine to build IPX and Netbios shells. It's complicated, but it does gives you the ability to play most of the popular games that are out there like *Doom* and *Falcon*.

There are a number of games about, particularly in the shareware arena, which use files to facilitate multi-play. What this means is that everyone who wants to play a particular game has to be able to read and write to the same disk, which in itself brings about other problems. You can use a peer-to-peer network to support these games, rather than a server-based system, but the PC hosting the game will need a serious CPU as it will be doing twice the work of all the others.

Software Solutions

Next you'll need some suitable software. Novell Lite and Lantastic, both of which can operate peer-to-peer networks, are the cheapest options, with Lantastic probably having the edge in terms of reliability and resilience. One caveat is that while Lantastic is great for games which use shared disks, it doesn't support IPX. That basically means it won't work with *Doom*, which we think is a big black mark against it.

Novell Lite also has serious drawbacks in that it only supports up to four users, so it's of limited long-term use. On the plus side, however, it is relatively cheap and it does at least provide you with a *Doom* platform. Say no more.

The Sting

Now, if all that sounds simple, please allow me to disabuse you of that notion. The scope for things to go wrong is enormous. Many happy hours can be had sorting out interrupt conflicts, trying to find the tiny component that you have just dropped, buggering around with yards of cable trying to get it connected properly and then, when it works, trying to free enough memory to get the game to run as well as the network. We recommend that you buy some memory management software like Quarterdeck's QEMM 7, to help with this, but make sure that it doesn't conflict with the network driver!

If you're still determined to cable yourself up, then go for the cheapest 8- or 16-bit network card, depending on your budget. A 16-bit card can be had for as little as £40 from somewhere like Simply Computing. Use a T-piece and thinwire to connect to your buddies. All you'll have to buy in addition to the card will be a couple of terminators (T2000s are best!) and you'll need to find someone to build you an IPX driver if you don't have a pre-built one with your card. Remember, if all else fails, give up.

Technical Difficulties and Troubleshooting

Listed below are the most common difficulties we've come across, and how to solve them.

Problem: Nothing Works

The lights are on but nobody's home The card is in the PC, the software drivers are loaded (for network), the PCs are connected, but there ain't nuffin happenin'.

Things to check

1) Did the network driver give positive feedback when it loaded, (i.e. it said "Hello, I'm here")? If not then it may not be correctly configured.
2) Did the IPX driver load correctly? Again, it normally lets you know. If it didn't load then its parameters need checking. There is normally a configuration file that it reads its parameters from; a configuration file (e.g. NET.CFG). If you play with it then it'll probably never work again, but let's face it, what've you got to lose?
3) Is the 'network' working ? Many cards have small LEDs on the back which provide a heartbeat to indicate that all is well. These lights also flicker as data is transmitted and received. You should receive some diagnostic software with your card that will squirt signals out of the network port so you can look for traffic.
4) Is the software configured correctly? Probably the first thing to check. Have you told the game that you are connected via a network or serial link? For serial links, is the baud rate correct (and the same on both machines)? Is one person on call and the other on answer?

Problem: The machine locks up

So the lights are on. You're all set. The PCs are talking to each other and then... LOCKUP.... Yes it's time to press the red button and reach for another Bud.

Things to check

1) Maybe you've already had one Bud too many.
2) Is there an IRQ conflict? Check that the network card has a different IRQ to all the other devices (IRQ is a card's method of attracting the CPU's attention by shouting down a different ear hole to another card – the problem occurs when two cards shout down the same ear hole).
3) Is it a memory problem? Check whether the game needs a memory manager or uses a DOS extender as the combination of the two often causes all sorts of hassle.

Problem: I've set up a simple serial link and it doesn't work.

You've got two PCs cabled together but they don't seem to be talking to each other.

Things to check:

1) Does the game know which COM port the cable is connected to? Most games default to COM1, but you may have a mouse or modem in that port.
2) Are both games set to the same baud rate? If they are trying to communicate at different speeds you won't get anywhere.
3) Is the cable running close to power cables or another source of interference? If your cable is of a cheap, poorly shielded type, it may be picking up a lot of noise from nearby power cables.

Network Games

These games can be played across a network by two or more players.

Syndicate – American Revolt

Lends itself remarkably well to networking, does *Syndicate*. All the elements are there: violence, strategy and more gratuitous violence. What more could you ask? Networking this delicate, subtle, charming rendition of Swindon on a bad day gives you the ability to terminate the contracts of up to seven other syndicates with as much prejudice as you wish. Not only that, but with a little research you can disguise yourself as a civilian so that they don't nail you first. And if you spend truly staggering quantities of cash you can develop the ability to launch airstrikes against your enemies. Urban renewal in a pyrotechnic sort of way. *Syndicate* was always good, but this makes it brilliant. Just watch out for the cops.

Requirements: IPX and Novell Netbios. Max. no. of players: 8. Modes: Head-to-head only.

Supplier: Electronic Arts (0753 549442). Cost: *Syndicate* £45 *American Revolt* £20.

Spectre VR (shown above) from US Gold is one of several forthcoming network games.

Falcon 3/MiG 29/Hornet

What can be said about *Falcon 3* that hasn't been said already? This is the great-grand-daddy of all real flight sims. You can fly against the computer in loads of different areas and on loads of different missions. You can fly a campaign or a series of single flights. And you can fly for both sides, as well as getting to crash on an aircraft carrier if you buy the extra modules. But the best thing of all is that you can also go up against five real live opponents. Or, even better, the six planes in your flight could all be controlled by real people. Or you can have, say, 3 F-16s against 3 MiG 29s on a campaign. Or a number of single missions. Take your pick. The extra dimension added by co-operative play makes the risk of getting fired by playing at work worthwhile.

Requirements: IPX, Serial. Max. no. of players: 6. Modes: Head-to-head, co-operative, campaign or single mission.

Supplier: MicroProse (0454 326532). Cost: *Falcon 3* £24 Mig29 £20 *Hornet* (only available as an import).

Doom

Did I say *Syndicate* was violent? What I meant was that *Syndicate* is gently aggressive. *Doom* is unspeakably violent. And you can add to the thrill of massacring an Imp by then slaughtering your mates! Yes, you too can experience the delights of seeing the man in a grey suit firing a rocket straight at you while you hear your colleague peeing himself laughing at the next desk. You too can experience the pleasure of waiting in a good ambush point and mini-gunning the sucker as he strolls past. You too can chase the man in the grey suit around a courtyard brandishing a chainsaw and yelling "I'll get you, you sod!" You too can then run away from the man in the grey suit as you realise that he has got a shotgun. You too can explain to your boss why you have had a three-hour lunch break in the office and half of your staff are watching you play instead of working. You too can get network Doomed.

Requirements: IPX, Serial.
Max. no. of players: 4.
Modes: Co-operative, Deathmatch
Supplier: Transend (0274 622228)
Cost: £30.

Null Modem Games

The following games can be played with a serial link.

Seawolf

The replacement for *688 Attack Sub* – underwater action with submarines US vs. USSR

Supplier: Electronic Arts (0753 549442).
Cost: £40

IndyCar Racing

As seen at the Computer Shopper Show's excellent head-to-head match. Especially good if you have the Thrustmaster steering wheel and pedals.

Supplier: Virgin (081 960 2255).
Cost: £44.99

Falcon 3/Mig29/Hornet

As reviewed in the Network Games box, can be played two-player, head-to-head or co-operative.

Supplier: MicroProse (0454 326532).
Cost: *Falcon 3* £24 Mig29 £20 *Hornet* (*only available as an import*)

Populous/Populous 2

Great fun, two-player, God-type games with you having the ability to pour down righteous fire on your opponent.

Supplier: Electronic Arts (0753 549442).
Cost: *Populous* £20 *Populous 2* £34.99

Get a Load of my WAD!

The Winner

In which David McCandless (aka DoomMaster™, FragKing™ and WadEmperor™) drags home a bin bag full of *Doom* Wads and comes back the next week with a winner of our Design A *Doom* Level (and minus a girlfriend).

WE KNEW *Doom* was popular, but we didn't quite comprehend *how* popular. No amount of singing the praises of *Doom* could prepare us for the tidal wave of *Doom* levels which cascaded into our mail room. A staggering 120 of the best wads this side of CompuServe jiffy-bagged themselves to our humble address after DEU (*Doom* Editor Utility) was quietly sneaked on our cover disk in April. Over a whole week of testing we realised that some *PC Zone* readers were master WAD creators, some were great game designers, and some had the creative prowess of the writer of *So Haunt Me*.

The judging was by no means an easy process. But in the end – as the cliché goes – there could be only one winner. So congrats and claps to Gary McAndrew's TMP.WAD, an excellent sprawling level, which is both architecturally impressive and superbly playable, with the exact balance of puzzling, exploration and gore-stained hand-to-hand combat. Gary wins £100 of software, while the runners-up, Mark Cole's MELTDOWN and Steve Waite's SWFORT, receive a game each (and some extra freebies as well).

CD-WADS

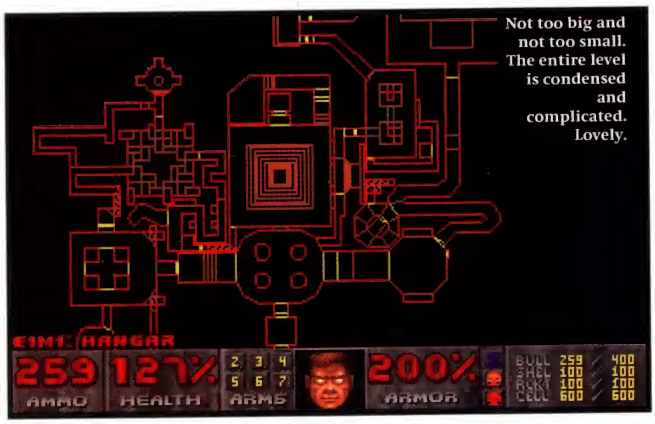
You'll find all the entries to our magnificent competition on this month's cover CD.

A perfect start room. An instant shotgun battle with two imp snipers, backed up by a neat sergeant ambush, backdropped with good-looking architectural motifs.

A nice variation of locations brings you into a multi-levelled mini warehouse.

A joyous set of battlements are a perfect sniping position for DeathMatch.

An interlocking series of scarey dark corridors hides secret doors and hidden bonuses abungo.



Not too big and not too small. The entire level is condensed and complicated. Lovely.

Superbly atmospheric use of texture will give anyone traversing this "skin" corridor the heebie-jeebies.

ENTRIES

WAD FILE	AUTHOR
ABBEY	Mark Davies
ABRAXIS	Nick Lee
AIRVENT	David Seager
AMAZE	Stuart Davies
ARENA	Anon
BARREL	R.T-Burke
BIG	Gareth Jones
BIGBAD	Bruce Sloan
BOBLEV	Robert Hanbleton
CANALS	M.Booth
CAST2	Paulo Arrais
CASTLE	Mike Wilsher
CHRIS	Chris McMullen
COOP	Anon
CORPSVIL	Paul Ambridge
DANLEV	Dan Haley
DAPHU	Harmesh Daphu
DEATH	Gareth Jones
DEATH	Timothy Wilson
DEATH	Van Boechel
DHP	David H.Parry
DJSLEVEL	David Seager
DMT	D Tomlius
DOOMLEVS	Chris Wigman
DOOMSDAY	Tim Tiek
E1L1	David Moore
E1L1	S.D.Davies
E1L1,2,3 & 9	Peter Edwards
E1L2BEE9	Jeff Hammersley
E1L3	Timmy the Toad
E2M4	Gordon Anscombe
ELL	Mr Elliot Spencer
ENTRY	Darren Latham
EVIL	Graham Wyatt
FACTORY	Mr J.Calder
FAWAAD	Fawaad Moied
FINAL	M.Lister
FINAL	S. Sherborne
FINAL12	Peter Winfieldale
FINAL2	Phil Snowdon
GARETH1	Gareth Jones
GOLDMINE	James Thompson
GUS	Angus Stewart
HANGAR	Mike Wilcox
HELL	James Hughes & Less Watson
HOAGY	Anon
IMPCHAOS	M.Harvey
IMPFORT	Mike Ferguson
INCINER8	David Wilson
JOELS	Joel Hogarth
JOHNS	Jon Shaw & Simon Crisp
JOM69	Johnam Eli Gudjonsson
JON	Johnathon Young
KAJ	Anon
KEVIN	Kevin Bly
KEVIN	Kevin Fox
KIRK	Patrick Fraioli
LEV1	Colin Waugh
LEV2	Colin Waugh
LIPS	D.Rigby
MACHINERY	David Seager
MARK	Mark Stump
MATTHEW	Matthew Bashton
MORTIS	Ben Sidwell
MYHOUSE	S.Murray
MYLEVEL	Simon Green
NEIL	Neil Porter
NEWAGE	Anon
NEWDOOM	Robert Baker
NICK	Nick Freeman
NIGEL	Mr.Nigel Disley
OLLYSLEV	Oliver Atkins
PATWO11	P.Wissles
PSYCHO	John Bennett
RMCINNES	Rob McInnes
ROB	Mr R.Bellamy
SENDME	Andrew Cox
SHIPS	David Seager
SNIPER	Philip Moyles
SPANGOOD	Stephen Angood
STORM	B.V.A. Ruimshoot
STYX	Bob Cawte
TELEPORT	Nick Honey
THE-MAZE	David Jirku
TIGER-21	Tony Palmersjo
TIME2DIE	Martin Dean
TRIAL	The Doctor
TRIP14	James Clover
TURNBULL.	Dave Turnbull
WHIPLASH	Martin Whitmarsh
YELLOW	D.Rigby
ZARNEK	David Massingham

FINALISTS

BUNKER	Glen Levisohn
CARNAGE	C.P.Wright
CHAOS	C.P.Wright
COMP	S.A.Perry
DAVES2ND	Dave Cameron
DE2106	David Emmett
DEUS	Brian McKevitt
DOMAIN	David Brown
DRDOOM1	Dave Farr
E1L3	Jim Papakostas
GRAYDAY	Paulo Caixinha
JAIL	Per Bergstrand & Anders Naucler
JEFF247	Jeff Smalley
MAYHEM	Anon
MNTDOOM	John Meaden
MTGLEVEL	Dr.Martin Giblin
NUCLEAR	Simon Colloney
PLANT	Anon
RD1	R.W.Brown
ROBS	Robert Watson
TEMPLE	David Harvey
TONE2	Tony Jull
WRECK	Chris Davie

RUNNERS-UP

SWFORT	Steve Waite
MELTDOWN	Mark Cole

SPECIAL PRESENTATION PRIZE

PSYCHO	John Bennett

WINNER

TMP	Gary McAndrew

TROUBLESHOOT

FEATURING THE HACKMASTERS™ AND THE TRUEPLAYERS™

In the urban sprawl of the gamesplaying jungle, two factions fight to maintain a major shareholding in the gamesplaying market. The TruePlayers™ – who, in between church and regular evening meals, pick their way through reams of arcade adventures and interactive movies. They never cheat. They never hack. Unlike, the sons of the ghetto – The HackMasters™. A fraternity of techno wizzes who spend all week up to their necks in hexadecimal, games codes and sector eds.

FREE TIPS LINE

Phone: 071 917 7693

Ask for TruePlayer™ Tips from 2.00pm to 6.00pm on Wednesdays only.

Yes, we said free. Just ring this number and ask for all the latest tips, cheats, hacks, cracks, solutions and spoils for all the latest games. This is not an answering machine. This is not a premium line number. A real person on the other end of the line will be happy, nay over the moon, to oblige you.

The HackMasters™

AH, THE summer drought is upon us. What a pain. The amount of hacks, cracks and cheats has slowed from a gush to but a trickle over the last few months. Rest assured faithful hack followers, the autumn and winter will bring a tsunami of cheats, we assure you. With baited breath and slightly greasy fingers, we await the thrills of *System Shock*, *Inferno* and *Doom II: Hell On Earth*.

Another factor in, what will be known as, the Great Hack Drought of '94, is that accursed scourge – GCSE's. Several of our chief HackMasters™ are of the pre-drinking age and so, have been stricken by the heavy hammer blows of the national curriculum. Rest assured hack fans, they'll be back in force next month.

BACK UP

Most, if not all, of the hacks on this page will require changing actual game files (mainly savegame files, peppered with the odd main .EXE file). It is then sensible to back up the file specified in the hack. To do this, simply enter the directory containing the file, say for example SAVEGAME.SAV, and back it up thus:

```
COPY SAVEGAME.SAV SAVEGAME.BAK
```

If you make a bad mistake and start crying and all, then restore files by typing:

```
COPY SAVEGAME.BAK SAVEGAME.SAV
```

HEXADECIMAL

Your PC counts strangely. In hexadecimal (base 16). We count in decimal (base 10). For the HackMaster's experience you only really need to learn a few choice hex numbers (see table below).

HEX	DECIMAL
09H	09
0AH	10
0FH	15
10H	16
20H	32
28H	40
32H	50
40H	64
63H	99
64H	100
C8H	200
FAH	250
FFH	255

WHAT YOU NEED

There are three things every HackMaster™ groupie must have (well, at least one of them).

❶. DEBUG Free with DOS is a program called *Debug*. A very useful program it is too, since it allows you to edit files of all descriptions and subtly change the data therein. It is the program we use most in the Hackmaster Zone™, and since it is the most user-unfriendly program *on this planet*, a brief introduction/explanation is necessary. Here's a step-by-step guide to a *Debug* hack:

To run it just type DEBUG in the appropriate directory (i.e. the one mentioned in the hack blurb). It should run automatically and produce a little '>' prompt. If you get a "file not found" style error then your DOS path hasn't been set properly. Refer to the MS-DOS manual and remember the bottom line – don't ring us (no matter how desperate) unless it's TruePlayer™ Tips day.

```
1  ‹return›
```

Now, once you have a little '>' prompt you should type in the commands listed in the program, starting with the line above the "N" command. This tells *Debug* which program is to be hacked. There should be no space between the "N" and the full filename.

```
2 ›L ‹return›
```

This command loads the file you've just specified into memory and into the hands of the hacker.

```
3 ›E 0100 v ‹return›
```

This is the Edit function. Simply type is as it appears above, i.e. with a space between the "E" and the address (9CBE) and the "v". The "v" stands for a value you will enter yourself, ranging between 00 and FF (0 to 255 decimal).

```
4 ›e0124 67 03 50 50
```

If the edit command looks something like this (i.e. a long list of numbers), then press RETURN after the address (the first four-digit code) and *Debug* will repeat your command (see below). Then simply type in the values which follow (90, 90 etc.) pressing SPACE between each one, except the last when you should press RETURN. So basically, the command should be enacted thus (with what you must type shown in green):

```
›E 0124‹Return›
21FB:0124 FE.67 ‹space› 0E.03 ‹space› D1.50
‹space› 9D.50 ‹return›
›
5 ›W ‹return›
```

This command writes the hacked file back onto the disk. A message saying "writing xxxxx bytes" will appear, where xxxxx is the size of the file (it varies). Nothing will have been changed on your hard disk until you type this command. Therefore, if you've made a mistake earlier just quit *Debug* and start the process again.

```
6 ›Q ‹return›
```

This quits you back to DOS.

❷ A DISK SECTOR EDITOR

Another useful bit of kit is a Disk Sector Editor, such as *XTree Gold* or *PC Tools*. If you own one, then you'll know how to use it – but it is important to note that the offset (or address) in a debug hack is for *Debug* which automatically adds 256 bytes (or 100 hex) to the address. So, if you prefer to use your editor, and a separate disk editor hack isn't included, then you just deduct 100 hex from the address. So, if an address is 0141 on the page, then your address will be 0041. It's a simple case of deducting one from the second figure on the left. If in doubt, use *Debug*.

HackMaster Special

DOOM MEGA-HACK

There comes a time in every HackMaster's life when he/she can sit back on his/her canvas director's chair and say he/she has reached the pinnacle of his/her career, the summit of his/her hacking abilities (who can say we're sexist now, eh?), the zenith of Mount Cheatdom. Two such arch emperor HackMasters are Greg Lewis and Matt Fell. They shall go down in gamesplaying history as "The People Who Hacked *Doom* And Made It Even Better Than It Was Already". Using but a simple sector editor (such as *PC Tools* or *XTree Gold*) and the ground-breaking research pioneered by these two HackGods, you, faithful acolyte, now have the chance to experiment freely with the voluminous code of *Doom*. A shotgun with the fire rate of a chaingun? It's a moment away. Infinite weapons? They are yours. Faster rockets? You can have them. Floating monsters? Happy Birthday. Just follow our guide and *Doom*, its code and your conception of it, will be blown away, like badly attached leaves taped to a rather large fan.

STARTING UP

Okay, before you continue, there are two things you must do. Firstly, these hacks only work with version 1.2. of *Doom*. Not 0.9, 1.1 or 1.4. To verify that you have 1.2, check the game's loading screen for a "DOOM OPERATING SYSTEM 1.2" banner. To double check, ensure the file DOOM.EXE is exactly 580,391 bytes long. Secondly, once you're positive you have the correct version of the world's best shoot'em up, back up the EXE file. You must, must, must, must, must back up the file. These hacks will change your copy of *Doom* irrevocably. If you do not have a back up you'll be stuck with your "enhanced" version of *Doom* forever. To back up simply type:

```
COPY DOOM.EXE DOOM.BAK
```

and to restore, type:

```
COPY DOOM.BAK DOOM.EXE
```

You are now ready to begin.

THE BOTTOM LINE

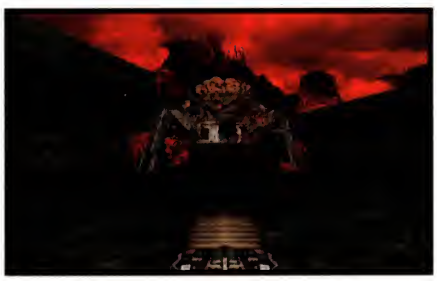
If you get into trouble ring us on TruePlayer™ Tips day (Wednesday 2pm to 6pm) for free tips support.

These hacks are copyright of Felden Productions 1994. If you try and pass them off as your own to another magazine, we'll get you, we will.

PC Zone and Dennis Publishing take no responsibility for alleged hardware or software damage caused by direct or indirect use of the HackMasters™ hacks and cracks. If the chances of damage were higher than 0.0000001% then we wouldn't be printing them. Make sure you follow the instructions and nothing can happen.

METHOD

The method for these hacks is simple. Each hack will have a column of numbers. The first long number (i.e. 85BCC OR 88278) is the address of the code. The next short number in brackets is the value you will find stored in that address, while the last short number is the new figure you must plonk into that address. So, using your sector editor, scroll down to each long address, check it's the correct address by comparing its contents to the number in brackets, and then enter the new value. Enter all the figures for each hack and then save it to disk. Load *Doom* as per usual and roll about in the joyful after-affects of such blatant hackery.



Want to dispatch that pesky spider monster in five seconds flat? Then just try our new SuperWeapons hack.

NOTE: If you're using these hacks in a DeathMatch or Co-operative environment, you must have enacted the hack exactly on all the machines in your setup. It'll crash otherwise.

• HACK 1

SUPERWEAPONS

This hack will give you amazing firepower. BFG? Pah, 'tis but a pea-shooter to these babies. Under the influence of this hack, the shotgun, rocket launcher and plasma gun will have the fire-rate of the chaingun, making you almost invulnerable, thus allowing you to dispatch King RocketHands in five seconds flat. Oh, and you'll have infinite ammo for those three weapons. Warning: DeathMatch with this hack becomes a quick, cruel farce.

```
85BCC (01)     05
85BFC (03)     05
85C14 (02)     05
85C2C (02)     05
87C18 (02)     01
87DFC (03)     01
87E18 (07)     01
87E20 (17)     12
88064 (08)     01
88080 (0C)     01
8809C (00)     01
880B8 (03)     01
880D4 (04)     01
880F0 (04)     01
8810C (04)     01
88240 (03)     01
88248 (3D)     39
8825C (14)     01
88278 (04)     91
88294 (04)     01
8B740 (A0)     40
8B741 (1C)     1F
```

• HACK 2

SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT MONSTERS

We won't give too much away about this hack, just that it'll scare your pants off, and that, once you've recovered said underwear, it might be an excellent little trick to play on your unsuspecting "*Doom* Chum". Even SuperWeapons may not spare you defeat at the hands of these terrors.

```
8B43C (D6)     15
8B43D (00)     01
```

DeathMatched Doom will take on a whole new (silly) dimension with our splendiferous Doom hacks.

```
8B448 (D3)    12
8B449 (00)    01
8B44C (D3)    12
8B44D (00)    01
8B494 (9C)    40
8B495 (00)    01
8B4A4 (99)    3C
8B4A5 (00)    01
8B4EC (B9)    FF
8B4FC (B6)    FC
8B544 (F2)    5D
8B545 (00)    01
8B550 (EF)    00
8B554 (00)    57
8B555 (00)    01
8B59C (F2)    D6
8B5A8 (EF)    D3
8B5AC (00)    D3
8B5F4 (FF)    B9
8B604 (FC)    B6
8B64C (26)    F2
8B64D (01)    00
8B658 (00)    EF
8B65C (22)    00
8B65D (01)    00
8B6A0 (00)    27
8B6A4 (15)    26
8B6B0 (12)    00
8B6B1 (01)    00
8B6B4 (12)    22
8B6FC (40)    FC
8B6FD (01)    00
8B708 (00)    EF
8B70C (3C)    00
8B70D (01)    00
8B754 (5D)    9C
8B755 (01)    00
8B764 (57)    00
8B765 (01)    00
```

• HACK 3
FASTER MONSTERS

Some people play *Doom* and some people play *Doom*. Some will eat up all the threats in Ultra Violence during a "snack-gap"; others will dawdle around "I'm Too Young", wondering if they're man enough to take on "Hurt Me Plenty". So, for those who think they're tough, maybe they'd like to take in a little target practice. They'll need it if they apply our Faster Monsters hack. The "v" in the third column refers to a figure you enter yourself. The best figure to try first is double the bracketted number. (Remember these figures are in hexadecimal; quick doubles are 08=10, 0A=14, 0C=18, 10=20.)

```
8B45C (08)    v    v=Imp's
                   speed
8B5B4 (08)    v    v=
                   Trooper's
8B50C (08)    v    v=
                   Sergeant's
8B564 (0A)    v    v=Demon's
8B6BC (0A)    v    v=
                   Spectre's
8B614 (08)    v    v=Cacod-
                   emon's
8B66C (08)    v    v=Lost
                   soul's
8B6C4 (08)    v    v=Baron's
8B71C (0C)    v    v=Spider's
8B774 (10)    v    v=Rocket
                   Hand's
```

• HACK 4
TOUGHER MONSTERS

If you're big enough for "Faster Monsters", why not try taking not just twice as fast, but twice as tough monsties as well:

```
8B428 (3C)    78
8B480 (14)    28
8B4D8 (1E)    3C
8B530 (96)    2C
8B531 (00)    01
8B588 (96)    2C
8B589 (00)    01
8B5E0 (90)    20
8B5E1 (01)    03
8B638 (64)    C8
8B690 (E8)    D0
8B691 (03)    07
```

• HACK 5
FASTER MONSTER MISSILES

And while we're on the subject, why don't we change their missile speeds as well?

```
8B826 (0A)    v    v=IMP's
                   fireball
8B87E (0A)    v    v= Cacod-
                   emon's
8B8D6 (0F)    v    v=Baron's
```

• HACK 6
SOUP YOURSELF UP

Of course, with all these swifter, tougher, meaner monsties floating about, you might need a bit of tarting up yourself. Try these:

```
8B92E (14)    v    v=Rocket
                   speed
8B986 (19)    v    v=Plasma
                   speed
8B9DE (19)    v    v=BFG
                   speed
```

• HACK 7
ROCKET MINES

Or, alternatively, if you want to leave rocket mines for a closely pursuing demon or DeathMatch pal, try this:

```
8B92C (00)    FE
8B92D (00)    FF
8B92E (14)    FF
8B92F (00)    FF
```

• HACK 8
KAMIKAZE TROOPERS

This one will make things even harder. As soon as those daredevil troopers get close to you then – blam! They'll explode with the force of a rocket, taking you with them. Tip: Shoot them before they get too close.

```
8B4A0 (00)    73
8B4F8 (00)    73
```

• HACK 9
REALLY KAMIKAZE

Even tougher still, enact the following little hack and those kamikaze troopers will explode as soon as they *see* you. Watch out.

```
8B4A4 (99)    73
8B4FC (B6)    73
```

• HACK 10
TAKE'EM WITH YOU

May be you need to join the club. Type this tiny hack to take a few of them with you when you die:

```
8B3F8 (7F)    73
```

• HACK 11
MORE KAMIKAZE

Hey, but it may not be enough. Others seem to be primed and ready too.

```
8B450 (D8)    73
8B4A8 (9E)    73
8B500 (BB)    73
```

• HACK 12
ROCKET FIRING IMPS

A new kind of imp has been designed by Demon HQ. The old-style, classical fireball missiles have been replaced by new, full-frontal, fast-firing rocket shells. However, take warning: stay well and truly sharp for these ones. These hombres are tough – very tough indeedy.

Tip: Good for practising evasive manoeuvres for DeathMatch.

```
8B7EC (50)    66
8B7F8 (0C)    0A
8B818 (52)    73
8B820 (0D)    3A
8B826 (0A)    14
8B82A (06)    0B
8B834 (03)    14
```

• HACK 13
BARREL GUN

Our reply to this is the new, all-purpose toxic barrel gun. Yes, fire a shotgun or pistol at a wall and see the puffs turn into highly volatile barrels. Be careful though (especially with the shotgun).

```
8B9FC (4C)     78
8B9FD (00)     01
8BA00 (E8)     14
8BA01 (03)     00
8BA28 (00)     7A
8BA29 (00)     01
8BA40 (64)     10
8BA41 (00)     27
8BA4C (10)     06
8BA4D (02)     00
8BA4E (00)     08
```

• HACK 14
FLOATING MONSTERS

To combat the threat of the new barrel gun, Demon HQ have devised an even worse threat – fully floating monsters. Watch out – they could be anywhere.

```
8B475 (00)     42
8B4CD (00)     42
8B525 (00)     42
8B57D (00)     42
8B5D5 (00)     42
8B6DD (00)     4C
```

• HACK 15
TOTAL INVISIBILITY

And so, reluctantly, we have to reply with our ultimate weapon, which will cut through challenge and gameplay in equally-sized swathes. Yes, we unhappily unveil for you, our prized hack – Total Invisibility. With this hack engaged, the monsters will be completely oblivious to your existence and will not even react as you kill them, mindlessly, one after the other. Use this hack at your peril.

```
8B41C (06)     02
```

DETROIT
(Impressions)

Kevin Cheung, a highly capable new recruit to the HackMaster™ ranks, has come up with a swift *debug* hack for the not-dissimilar-to-*Sim City* sim game, *Detroit*. Play the game as per usual and save your game. Quit out and back up the file DETROIT.SAV. Debug with:

```
>NDETROIT.SAV
>L
>E 0307 FF FF FF        Max money
>E 2607 13 13  }
>E 260F 0D 0D  }
>E 2617 08 08  }
>E 261F 0B 0B           Max tech
                        levels
>E 2627 06 06  }
>E 262F 0D 0D  }
>E 2637 0D 0D  }
>W
>Q
```

ALONE IN THE DARK II
(Infogrames)

Just a quick Kevin Cheung update for our AITD II hack in issue 14. To turn this superlative, vector-based, arcade-adventure into a superlative, vector-based, shoot'em up, do the following. Start the game and remove all the items from your inventory. Save the game in slot one and exit. Debug with the following script.

```
>NSAVE0.ITD
>L
>E 68D0 33
>E 68D6 17 34 35 35 6F 35 32 35 23
>W
>Q
```

Now, on restarting, you'll be in possession of all the weapons (the revolver, the derringer, the pirate pistol, the thompson, and the – gosh! – Riot Gun).

OUTPOST
(Sierra)

Stuck in this outer-space sim? Good. Serves you right for buying a space game without laser guns in it. How, we ask you, can you have a game set in the inky void, so championed by *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*, and not have the vaguest whiff of ion cannons, proton torpedoes, or plasma guns? Take out your frustration, then, with this in-built cheat discovered by Andrew Young and Jason Murphy. During the game, use the following "hot keys":

```
CTRL+F11        Unlimited resources
CTRL+F12        Increases rates
```

THEME PARK
(Bullfrog/EA)

For those who missed last issue's *Theme Park* hack (there seem to be quite a few of you judging by the TruePlayer tips calls), here's a spread of possible hacks you can enact on this rather boring, in our opinion, sim thingimy bob.

1) Give this quick debug from Andy Hayton a go. Start a game with the nickname "CHEAT" and then borrow as much money as the bank will allow. Save the game in slot zero and quit out. Enter the SAVE directory and back up the file CHEAT.G0, Then debug:

```
>NCHEAT.GO
>L
>E 0112 00 00 00 00 00
>W
>Q
```

When you return to the game, the loan will have been written off.

2) Alternatively, you could try John Downie's mega-money hack. Use the same method as before and debug:

```
>NCHEAT.GO
>L
>E 010D 77
>W
>Q
```

You'll now have 2 Billion credits.

3) Or, if *debug* scares you some, try this tasty little number from Paul Johnson. Start the game as per normal, and enter your nickname as "DEMO". When the menu appears, choose CONTINUE GAME for a massive pre-built theme park. Look after the park for two years and then auction it (spend as little money on the building as possible over that time). After the auction, you should have 2 million pounds or so accrued for you to spend on your own personalised park.

(Right) Try out our super-evil, extra nefarious, ultra-malevolent Tie Fighter pilot.
(Below) A rather poor theme park, like the one below? You need our billionaire hack, you do.

TIE-FIGHTER
(US Gold)

For those dying to see the cut-scenes of *Tie Fighter*, check out our cover disk this month for your own highly skilled pilot, rather ironically called CHEAT.TFR. Z

Dearest readers, you may have noticed that *Troubleshooter* in issue 18 came to a rather abrupt end. This no doubt has led to you pulling your hair out trying to figure out just what the last words of the last sentence of the last paragraph of the last page were. Wonder no longer, they were "...particularly useful for the Oghma Infinium." (Soz for the wait by the way.)

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The Sound Galaxy Voyager Double-Speed Multimedia Upgrade Kit from Aztech: low on price, high on content.

Zen and the Art of Multimedia

These days, having a PC capable of playing games is only half the story. If you really want to enjoy state-of-the-art entertainment software, your PC needs to be MPC compliant. So what exactly does that mean, and what additional equipment will you need to meet it? CD-ROM junkie Laurence Scotford explains.

MULTIMEDIA is exactly what it says: the combination of media like audio, video, digitised photographs, computer animation and so on. For these sorts of elements to be combined in a computer game is nothing new. But games designers who hoped to incorporate a large quantity of audio and video into their products have always faced two major difficulties: (i) a couple of minutes of soundtrack and video will easily fill a 1.44Mb disk, even when compressed, so to get anything worthwhile you needed a lot of floppy disks, which was both inconvenient and commercially unviable; (ii) there was no standard for any of these elements, so writing a piece of software which brought together video, audio and so on and also ran on more than one make of PC was a veritable nightmare.

The solution to the first problem was, of course, CD-ROM. CD-ROM technology has been available for some time, but it has only been in the last couple of years that drives have become fast enough and cheap enough to be considered a mass-market computing device. CD-ROM simply provides a way to store a massive amount of data (typically 650Mb when formatted), in a convenient and cheap format. It also enables audio to be stored as digital audio alongside data rather than being encoded in a machine specific format.

The second problem was not so easily solved. At least it wasn't until a group of companies active in this sector of the market got together to form the Multimedia PC Marketing Council: a self- ☞

Zen & The Art of Multimedia

styled, ad hoc standards council which sets compatibility standards for multimedia PCs. Its aim is to ensure that every game, or other software title, that carries an official MPC logo will run as expected on any machine meeting the appropriate MPC level. To date there have been two MPC levels established (see the box *MPC: The Facts* for details), although most new multimedia software is being written to the later specification, and MPC Level One is quickly becoming an anachronism.

The Windows Connection

Strangely, although many games do exploit the multimedia capabilities of advanced PCs, you won't see too many carrying the MPC logo. Why? Because an integral part of the MPC philosophy is that true MPC software is designed to run under Microsoft Windows. This makes sense when the software in question is an atlas or encyclopedia, because these sorts of products lend themselves to Windows' point and click environment.

Windows is not a particularly good platform for games, however, because it is not designed to facilitate fast graphics throughput, which is essential for most games. This situation is likely to change over the next couple of years as Windows 4 becomes part of the mainstream. This latest version of Windows has the facility to accommodate the special system-intensive requirements of games, thus overcoming the problems inherent in its predecessors.

Choosing the right system

Exactly how you go about upgrading your PC depends on what hardware is already present and what expansion options you have. If you have not used your PC for games as yet, then it's quite likely that you'll need everything: CD drive, audio/interface card, and speakers. In that case your best option is to buy a one-stop solution upgrade kit.

The Beethoven SuperSonic Multimedia Upgrade Kit from Wearnes: it's pricey, but for your money you get a top notch programmable sound card, a CD-i compatible drive and enough games to keep you happy for a long time.

If you already have a sound card, it's worth double checking to see whether it has an interface suitable for the drive you have in mind before you rush out and buy anything. It really is worth avoiding a situation in which you have both a sound card and a separate CD interface card in the same machine, which, in most cases, will require you to give up two 16-bit expansion slots.

If you have no choice but to get a drive with a separate interface card then you might want to consider purchasing a SCSI drive and interface. SCSI devices can be chained together, so you'll only need the one card, even if you do decide to add another piece of hardware at a later date.

Whether you buy an internal or an external drive should depend largely on whether you have a spare 5.25" drive bay in your machine, but you must also take care that you have a spare power cable and that your power supply is of a sufficient rating to support another drive.

Fitting a multimedia upgrade

It's likely that fitting your multimedia upgrade is going to be the first time you've had to delve into the depths of your machine. Don't worry – it's not nearly as dangerous or as painful as it seems. We've

Iron Helix is one of the new breed of all-singing, all-dancing CD games and it's included with the Wearnes upgrade kit.

The Aztech IDE CD drive. The interface card shown here is supplied with the review models, but the production drive will connect directly to the IDE cables fitted in your machine.

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had plenty of practice at adding multimedia kits in the *PC Zone* office, so we've put together a brief list of steps to keep you out of trouble.

1. Before you do anything, make sure you have all the bits you need, including necessary connecting cables and mounting screws. Nothing is worse than getting half way through an upgrade only to find you can't complete it.

2. Now read the documentation for your audio/interface card. This will tell you what range of I/O addresses, IRQ lines and DMA channels it is possible to set the card to (for an explanation of the acronyms see Multimedia Glossary box, page 114). You should note these down. Now double-check your other hardware to see if you have anything already installed in your machine that might clash with these values. If you don't know what settings your existing hardware uses, then you should be prepared to do some experimenting and possibly some tweaking.

3. Before fitting either your audio/interface card or the drive, check that the connecting cables are long enough to reach between the two without being stretched. If they aren't, you'll have to choose a new location for the card. Move another card out of the way if necessary, but earth yourself by touching a metal pipe before doing so.

4. If your sound card settings are configured by jumpers on the actual card, now is the time to adjust them if you need to. Trying to change jumpers while the card is in position is fiddly and usually results in the jumper blocks being lost in the innards of the PC. Don't forget that prior to handling the card you should earth yourself to discharge any build-up of static electricity.

5. Before fitting the CD drive, make sure that you are going to be able to reach the screw holes on both sides of the bay that you are placing it in. In a lot of cases you will find that you have to temporarily remove another drive or a section of another bay to reach them. If you must move a hard drive, take extra special care not to knock or drop it.

6. When fitting the actual drive we usually find it easiest to attach the cables to it first and then slide it into position, feeding the cables through ahead of it. When the drive is almost in position, plug the power cable into it. It is imperative that

MPC: The Facts

Wondering whether your PC currently comes up to spec? Check it against the two MPC levels explained below. The specifications printed here are the bare bones. The MPC council publishes a full specification which goes into lots of scary detail that you'd probably rather not know about.

MPC Level One

386SX (or compatible) microprocessor.
2Mb of RAM.
A 3.5" high density (1.44 Mb) floppy disk drive.
A hard drive of at least 30Mb capacity
A CD-ROM drive with a sustained 150K/sec transfer rate and an average seek time of one second or less. Must be capable of playing audio CDs and have a front panel volume control.
An 8-bit (16-bit recommended) sound card with Digital playback and sampling capabilities, a microphone input, a synthesiser with a minimum of six polyphonic, multi-timbral voices and two polyphonic, percussive voices, an internal mixer capable of combining input from three (four recommended) sources and producing stereo ouput at line-level from a back panel connector. The four sources are: CD audio, synthesised sound, digitised sound, and (recommended but not required) an auxiliary input source.
A VGA compatible display adaptor, and a colour VGA compatible monitor.
A standard 101-key IBM-style keyboard with standard DIN connector, or a keyboard which delivers identical functionality utilising key-combinations.
A two-button mouse with bus or serial connector, with at least one additional communication port remaining free.
A standard 9-pin or 25-pin asynchronous serial port, programmable up to 9600 baud.
A standard 25-pin bi-directional parallel port.
One MIDI port with In, Out, and Thru.
An IBM style analogue or digital joystick port.
Microsoft Windows 3.0 or later with multimedia extensions.

MPC Level Two

A 25MHz 486SX (or compatible) microprocessor.
4Mb RAM (8Mb recommended).
A 3.5" high density (1.44Mb) floppy disk drive.
A 160Mb or larger hard drive.
A CD-ROM drive capable of sustained 300K/sec transfer rate, with an average seek time of 400ms or less; must be capable of playing audio CDs and have a volume control; must be multisession capable.
A 16-bit sound card with digital playback and sampling facilities; microphone input; a synthesiser with a minimum of six polyphonic, multi-timbral voices and two polyphonic, percussive voices, an internal mixer capable of combining input from three (four recommended) sources and producing stereo ouput at line-level from a back panel connector. The four sources are: CD audio, synthesised sound, digitised sound, and (recommended but not required) an auxiliary input source.
A colour monitor with display resolution of 640x480 with 65,536 (64K) colours.
A standard 101-key IBM-style keyboard with standard DIN connector, or a keyboard which delivers identical functionality utilising key-combinations.
A two-button mouse with bus or serial connector, with at least one additional communication port remaining free.
A standard 9-pin or 25-pin asynchronous serial port, programmable up to 9600 baud.
A standard 25-pin bi-directional parallel port with interrupt capability.
A MIDI port with In, Out, and Thru.
An IBM style analogue or digital joystick port.
Microsoft Windows 3.1 or later.

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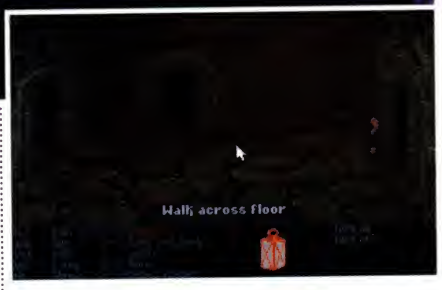

Wearnes' kit includes Return of the Phantom.

Wearnes hopes to whip up a storm by including Digital Integration's Tornado with its Beethoven upgrade kit.

you check that all cables are inserted the right way.

7. Finally screw the drive into position, then replace any other drives or chassis elements that you have had to remove. The other ends of the cables should now be threaded through the chassis in such a way that they won't get snagged when the case is placed back on. Then they can be attached to the relevant connectors on the audio/interface card.

New kits on the block

BELOW we look at some of the latest pieces of multimedia hardware to appear on the marketplace, and their value as upgrades for games machines.

Sound Galaxy Voyager

This double-speed multimedia upgrade kit quite clearly follows Aztech's policy of providing hardware with a high compatibility level at a low cost. It's an attractively packaged bundle consisting of a double-speed internal CD-ROM drive, a 16-bit sound card, stereo speakers, microphone, and a selection of entertainment and productivity software. Installation is a pretty painless affair since the kit comes with absolutely everything you need, including all the cabling and mounting screws. You just have to find a free 5.25" bay for the drive and an unused 16-bit expansion slot. The actual process of fitting the drive and card should take no more than 10 minutes thanks to a very clear Quick Start guide included in the package.

The only difficulty is deciding which of the three connectors on the sound card to attach the drive to. The three interfaces are marked for Sony, Panasonic and Mitsumi drives, but the drive supplied is one of Aztech's own and there's no indication as to which of these three it is compatible with. It's obviously not the Sony, because the cable is the wrong size, but it was only a lucky guess that led us to connect the drive to the Mitsumi interface, which, you'll need to know, turned out to be the right one. Despite the confusion, having a choice of three interfaces does mean you stand at least a little chance of upgrading your drive at a later date without having to change your sound card as well.

"The choice of three interfaces means you stand a chance of upgrading your drive."

The double-speed drive, an Aztech CDA 268-01A, performs well. With the supplied caching software installed, it coped with a range of games with no noticeable delay during off-the-disk animations or break-up in sound effects. It has all the features you'd expect, like Photo CD capability, headphone socket and front panel play and volume controls for audio CDs. A nice feature is the ability to slide open the tray to remove CDs when the power is off. The box also tantalisingly mentions FMV capabilities, but doesn't go as far as to say whether this is one of the few drives that will successfully play CD-*i* movies with a suitable MPEG card.

The audio-cum-CD interface card is the Sound Galaxy Nova 16. It's functionally equivalent to the Sound Blaster 16, and emulates the latter transparently without requiring any additional drivers.

This is an excellent package. The utilities allow you to control and configure the sound card in almost any way you can imagine: from the DOS command line, from Windows, or via a pop-up program that sits in the background while you're using other programs.

If you happen to purchase your CD drive separately, it usually comes with its own interface card. Avoid using it if you can.

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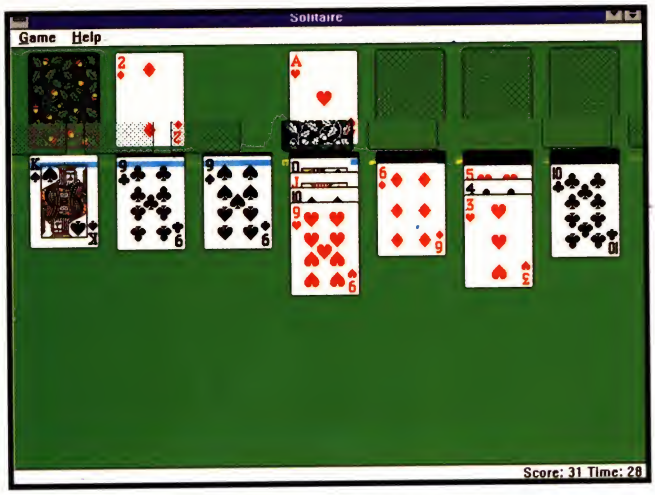

One example of the way multimedia can inject new life intotired old games is Wired For Sound Pro, which comes supplied with the Sound Galaxy bundle. It updates the standard Windows games of Solitaire and Minesweeper by adding sound effects and speech!

Games players probably won't be interested in either *The Software Toolworks Multimedia Encyclopedia* or *Action!* a multimedia presentation authoring tool. Of more interest are *Professor Multimedia*, a rather disjointed but nonetheless entertaining introduction to multimedia applications, and *Wired For Sound Pro*, a Windows resource CD that sets you up with talking and sound enhanced versions of popular Windows apps, including *Solitaire* and *Minesweeper*. It also contains hundreds of sounds, pictures and bizarre video clips.

The games included in the pack are *Comanche*, Novalogic's inventive and fun military helicopter sim, and *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis*. This is a talkie version of LucasArts' best adventure to date, and although it doesn't have Harrison Ford doing the voiceover, it's still quite engrossing.

Including, as it does, a microphone and a pair of small powered speakers, The Sound Galaxy Voyager Double Speed Multimedia Upgrade Kit is an excellent cost-effective buy for first time users looking for a one-stop upgrade solution.

Price: £280.83 Manufacturer: Aztech UK Telephone: 0734 814121

Beethoven Supersonic

Up front there's not a lot to distinguish the Beethoven Supersonic Multimedia Upgrade kit, produced by respected hardware manufacturer Wearnes, from the Sound Galaxy bundle. Like the Voyager kit, the Beethoven includes a double-speed drive, a 16-bit audio and interface card, and identical powered speakers. The most obvious differences are the lack of a microphone (which is no big deal since the one in the Voyager pack is so cheap and cheerful anyway) and different bundled software.

Installing the Beethoven kit was a little more fiddly than the process was for the Voyager. For a start, multiple manuals had to be referred to during the procedure, and, more significantly, the numbering of the pins on the connectors was non-existent, making close scrutiny of the diagrams in the manuals a must in order to avoid disaster. The installation software was also a bit ropey, both failing to exit Windows to complete the DOS installation, and omitting an important change to the CONFIG.SYS file.

If you can survive that little trauma, however, you'll find that the Beethoven kit has plenty to offer the average PC games player. Excepting the obligatory Voyetra sound utilities and a multimedia presentation program, the bundled software contains only two non-games items: Microsoft Bookshelf and a software demo PC (and the latter will be of some interest because, amongst other things, it carries a few game demos).

The games software has been sourced entirely from Spectrum Holobyte/MicroProse and consists of *Return Of The Phantom, Iron Helix, F-15 Strike Eagle III*, and *Tornado*. Yes, I know that *Tornado* is a Digital Integration game, but Spectrum Holobyte publishes it in the US.

An advantage of the ADSP-16 audio card that forms part of this kit is that, as well as transparently emulating AdLib and Sound Blaster cards, it also handles fashionable formats like Q-Sound (the bogus, but nonetheless effective, substitute for genuine 3D surround sound), and MPEG audio encoding. Its weakness is that its CD interface supports only the supplied Beethoven SuperSpin drive or the Sony CDU-31A.

Price: £417.13 Manufacturer: Wearnes Computer Systems Telephone: 0727 836330

The ADSP-16 Audio card is available as a stand-alone product for £182.13.

The CDD-110 CD drive is available as a stand-alone product, complete with CDC-005 controller card for £163.33.

A Multimedia Glossary

Trying to buy a multimedia PC, or to upgrade your existing system to give it multimedia capabilities is confusing enough without having to wade through a lot of technical mumbo jumbo. If you get stuck, just consult our jargon-busting guide below.

Average Seek Time: The average time taken (in milliseconds) for the CD drive's read head to locate the start of the data to be read.

CD-ROM: Compact Disc – Read Only Memory. The storage of large amounts of digital data on an ordinary CD. CDs are non-volatile, so you can't erase or write to them under normal circumstances.

DMA: Direct Memory Access. The method by which the CD interface can read or write to areas of memory directly, without the intervention of the central processor.

Double-speed: Any drive capable of a sustained transfer speed of 300K/second is a double-speed drive (see below for single-speed).

I/O Address: Each hardware device, like the CD interface, is assigned a unique number which it uses to pass information to and from the processor.

IRQ: Interrupt Request. The means by which the CD interface 'talks' to the processor.

MIDI: Musical Instrument Digital Interface. A standard way for digital instruments to communicate with each other.

MPC (Multimedia PC): Any IBM PC or compatible which meets or exceeds either MPC Level One or Level Two.

MPC Levels: The minimum compatibility standards set by the MPC Marketing Council (See *MPC: The Facts* box)

Multimedia PC Marketing Council: An ad hoc regulatory body set up by several companies involved in multimedia to establish standards for multimedia PCs and software.

Multisession: A drive which can read CDs which have been written to more than once is a multisession drive.

Multispin: A drive which is capable of spinning CDs at more than one speed is a multispin drive.

SCSI: Small Computer Systems Interface. A method for chaining together drives and other peripheral devices now growing more popular in the PC world.

Single-speed: Any drive capable of a sustained transfer rate of 150K/second is a single-speed drive.

Sustained Transfer Rate: The maximum speed (in characters per second) which can be maintained when the CD is transferring blocks of data.

Beware the IDEs of multimedia

Okay, so you've decided that you need to upgrade your machine to give it multimedia capabilities, but your current sound card doesn't support a CD drive and you haven't got a spare slot for an interface card. Neither do you have the budget to get rid of your existing sound card and buy in a new one with an interface. What do you do? Give up and forget the whole thing? Happily that's no longer necessary. Why? Because of a new breed of IDE compatible CD-ROM drives that is beginning to appear.

IDE is the type of interface that is most commonly used to connect hard disks to PCs. Usually there is provision inside the machine to add one or more additional hard drives. An IDE CD-ROM drive can be directly connected to the cabling made available for such purposes and it will then work without the need for any specialised hardware or software.

The other advantage that IDE drives bring with them is that the lack of the interface and cables, normally included with CD drives, pulls the price down to a truly affordable level. At present there are two double-speed IDE drives available. The first, from Bluepoint Monitor Corporation (0908 277007) retails for just £117.44. Aztech (0734 814121) should also have its IDE drive ready by the time you read this, and it will retail for £128.75.

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Dragons in flight sims, networking your house, and the whereabouts of Lord Lakin are among the varied and often bizarre subjects tackled by you, our readers, this month.

Questions, questions...

My family have recently bought a 486DX/33MHz and – due to my habit of playing *Day of the Tentacle* twice daily – have not been able to get near it. So, after having to fit in their letters and spreadsheets between my gaming sessions, they finally cracked and agreed to buy me a second-hand PC of about the same specification. How much (very roughly) would you expect this to cost? Would a Sound Blaster Pro be a good enough sound card? Does an SX or DX make any difference to games? And in very simple terms, could you explain what a serial link is? Is there some sort of cable to connect the two PCs? Bearing in mind that one will be on the ground floor of our house and the other in the loft, how much would this cost? Would I be able to play, say, networked *Doom* by this connection, or do I have to get something else to network games? At what price? I am completely lost!

Another thing. What flight sim would you recommend for a complete beginner such as myself? I do not want an incredibly realistic, heavy-duty flight sim, such as *Tornado*. Would *1942: Pacific Air War* be worth getting as I quite like the look of it? Would a Gravis analogue joystick be good enough for most flight sims? Is the Thrustmaster really worth the money? Would it be worth getting the weapons control system or whatever it's called (the one with the lever/gear stick) if I was going to be playing a lot of flight sims?

Chris Harris, Richmond, Surrey

PS You have probably answered this question before, but why don't you have a box in each review which describes how hard the game is to get running? I had so much trouble with *Arena: The Elder Scrolls* that I had to take it back, and I would hate to have so much trouble again.

The cost of your PC will depend on a number of things, including its age and condition, the size and type of monitor, the size and type of hard drive, the amount of memory and the presence or lack of any other items such as a CD drive. The best way to ensure you are getting a bargain is to scan the pages of a classified ads paper, like Loot, *and compare the prices of second-hand equipment in that. You will then know how much to expect to pay for a machine with the specification you require.*

The Sound Blaster Pro is getting on a bit, but it is a very widely supported card and cheap too. If you have the money to spare, you might want to consider a more up-to-date sound card like the Gravis Ultrasound Max or Sound Blaster AWE 32 (both reviewed in issue 18).

Yes, you will notice the difference between an SX and a DX with some games. This is especially the case with the 486 range, since some games, such as Falcon 3.0, *take advantage of the floating point functions if they are available.*

A serial link is simply a bi-directional cable that connects the serial ports of two machines. It is usually not possible to link two machines that are more than five feet apart because the signal attenuation in the cable makes the link unreliable. If you wish to link machines that are further apart you will need special networking equipment, which is very expensive. On the other hand, a standard serial cable can cost you as little as £15.

The registered version of Doom, *which we highly recommend, will work quite happily with either an IPX network or a serial link. To be honest, unless you have a lot of money to throw around you'd be better off sitting your machines close together and investing in a good quality serial cable.*

As far as flight sims are concerned I'd look at something like Strike Commander, Pacific Strike, *or* Overlord, *all of which are very action oriented.* 1942: Pacific Air War *is an excellent simulation, but it is quite involved and takes a little longer to learn than the other three games I've mentioned.*

The Gravis Analogue Pro and CH Products Flightstick or Flightstick Pro are excellent joysticks for flight simulations. The Thrustmaster Flight Control and Weapons Control System are very expensive and only worth buying if you are a dedicated flight sim fan and want the experience to be as close to the real thing as possible.

All PC games can be hell to install, but just how hellish depends on the way your machine is initially configured. If we come across a game that is particularly difficult, we usually say so in the body of the review.

Computer club concerns

Recently, I was looking through issue 17 of your ultimately skill mag and I found one of those "three games for 49p each" order forms. "Wow, great", I thought and looked through and picked out three: *Dune II* (£6.99), *Toyota Celica* (£0.49) and *Exterminator* (£0.49). I read through the rules and found out that when I ordered the games I would be automatically enrolled as a member of the club. Fine, but as I read on it said I was to be sent free copies of the magazine they produce and unless I brought one thing from every issue they sent me I would have to give back the games. I'm worried that if I do get the games and receive the copy of the magazine I will find that all the prices are very high, but will have to buy from them.

Please advise me on what I should do.

Will Carr, Bury St. Edmonds, Suffolk.

PS Congrats on the best computer mag around. Keep it up!

The very low prices you see in the advert are obviously an introductory offer designed to attract you to the club in the first place and you are unlikely to find the same low prices offered in the magazine. The way that clubs like this operate is to sell to you direct. This means that they can cut out the retailers margin, which gives you a typical saving of 10 to 25 per cent. You can get similar discounts from ordinary mail order firms. The advantage of a computer club is that you can read about the product before you buy it, and you can be certain that you will actually receive your game at the end of the day. The disadvantage is that you have to buy something from every issue for a year (even if there isn't anything you particularly want). However, clubs of this nature usually try to make the selection in each magazine as varied as possible. You do have to remember to send the club your choice every month, or you will automatically receive the main selection.

In search of Dutch Virgins

Can you tell me if there are any Virgin Megastores in Holland? If so, could you please tell me the address?

Ferry Klevet, Rotterdam, Holland

You'll find a Virgin Megastore at Speersort 2 – 6, 1012 FG Amsterdam. For opening hours you can call the store on 020 622 8929.

Lord Lakin or Lord Lucan?

Just a quick note about Paul Lakin. What happened to him? I recently looked at issue 15 and noticed that he has dropped from the coveted position of Editor to simply "contributor". Did he just quietly resign? Did he do something to lose all his friends and get bunked? In his review of *Zool 2* (issue 17), when he was writing about two-player mode, he wrote: "Unfortunately, I haven't got any friends so I can't tell what that's like." Also, the intro of said review seemed a bit offensive: "To play *Zool 2* requires lightning reflexes and co-ordination. Shame then that only Paul Lakin was left in the office when the game arrived." Perhaps you should tell us what happened.

Nick Fowler, Tollard Royal, Salisbury

All right, fair cop guv, you've got us good and proper. The fact is that Lord Paul Lakin mysteriously disappeared some weeks ago. His desk and home were strangely untouched save for some missing life insurance policies. We investigated for some time, but there were no friends we could question, and his close relatives seemed unable or unwilling to tell us anything. Nonetheless, rumours abound regarding his whereabouts. He's been reported as being alive and well and working in a supermarket in Arizona; some say that he's now a big financial tycoon based in a heavily guarded office in Docklands (a likely story!). We don't know the truth, but we can tell you that

we've been receiving unsolicited reviews signed Lord L, all postmarked Rio de Janiero....

We'd be grateful if readers would report any future sightings so we can clear up this mystery once and for all.

A club for stunts

HI TO EVERYONE reading this. Have you got *Stunt Island*? If so, then you will know that it is one of the best games available on the PC today, but only recently was its full potential reached.

I run the *Stunt Island* club, and I'm going to tell you a bit about it. Firstly though, for those people without the game, I'll give you the low down on it. Well, *Stunt Island* lets you make your own films, perform stunts in your own films and fly predefined stunts. It is one of the most comprehensive programs available today. There are hundreds of objects, vehicles and loads of other things to include in your films.

Now I'll go on to tell you about the *Stunt Island* club. What the club consists of is this: each member will receive a bi-monthly magazine. Included in this magazine will be such things as news, previews, reviews and tips on all of the hottest games presently around, the best tips and techniques for *Stunt Island*, a section for members to place their own advertisements, and also our film competitions.

The film competitions are the main part of the *Stunt Island* club and they work like this: in each film competition we will give a title and a list of objects that must be in the film, then the member chooses another 20 objects of their own choice. They then create the film and send it to us where we will watch every film and choose the best two every month. The two winners win themselves a cash prize. The lucky person to get first place will then be entered into our "end of year" competition where all the first-place films get rated against each other. We will then pick a first, second and third place, and the winners of these will receive a bigger cash prize. There will be a number of these film competitions each issue.

If you don't own a copy of the game then don't worry because I will also be selling copies of *Stunt Island* for £39.99, which is £10.00 off the R.R.P. If you do this and buy the game then you will also receive six months free membership to the club. If you are interested in joining the club or would like to purchase a copy of the game then please send a S.A.E. to us for more details.

Mark McDermott, The *Stunt Island* club, 27 Llys Nercwys, Mold, Clwyd, North Wales, CH7 1HR.

Thanks for the info Mark, and best of luck with the club. We hope you'll let us know how it's going in a few months time.

The missing programs...

I HAVE BOUGHT *PC Zone* since issue one and have enjoyed every issue. I have found a remarkable resemblance to the old Dennis mag called *Zero*: the typeset style, the humour, and of course, Duncan MacDonald, Paul Lakin and David McCandless.

PC Zone is almost identical to *Zero*; the way it reviews games and hardware, and the way features are written. I wonder why *Zero* ever finished.

Now we get to issue 16 of *PC Zone*. Floppy disk and CD-ROM versions are a very good idea, but with one drawback: if you want all the programs from the floppy disk and the CD you have to buy both? I would like to see all the floppy disk programs appear on the CD as well; another 1.44MB on a CD that can hold more than 650MB is virtually nothing and I am sure would not cost any more to produce.

If you cannot put the programs on the CD, why not make one mag with both the floppy disk and the CD on the cover? This would probably put up the cover price by about £1 which is better than paying almost £3 for another copy of the magazine I already have. As it is, the instructions for both floppy disk and CD are already printed in the mag. I have seen other PC magazines that have used both of these solutions to the problem so why can't you?

I hope you will consider my suggestions as I cannot really afford to buy two copies of *PC Zone*. I don't have a CD-ROM drive as yet, but I will be getting one in the near future, and I have access to one for the moment, so I would like to get the CD version now instead of getting them as back issues, which cost more and may be sold out anyway.

Jason King, Bury St. Edmonds, Suffolk

We couldn't agree with you more Jason. In fact, we agreed with your points even before we put issue 16 together, which is why we've always included the programs from the HD disk on the CD. Frankly, we're rather mystified as to why you are so certain that the HD programs aren't there. Anyway, you can rest assured that, as they have been on the CDs we've produced to date, the games and demos on the HD disk will always be included on the CD in future issues.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Fairy Tale

I recently purchased MicroProse's newest and probably most advanced simulator yet, *F-14: Fleet Defender*. I've been flying mostly the Oceana training theatre, but yesterday I began playing the North Cape theatre and the Kola Strike scenario. I had just begun the third mission of the scenario and was switching between the different aircraft in the mission with the inverse tactical view when suddenly, after a MiG-21 and a JA37 Viggen, there was a dragon: fire breathing, with flapping wings and a long tail, right out of a middle age fairy tale! I managed to find its location and moved in training mode to a position right behind it. When I got close enough I chose the M61 Vulcan gun and filled its belly with lead. In the debriefing it said "Ralph the Dragon destroyed by guns". Why would the *Fleet Defender* design team put what is obviously a joke in a game that is supposed to be really serious? I've got the dragon on videotape if there are any doubts concerning my reliability.

Robert Nihlson, Västerås, Sweden

Robert, we don't doubt your reliability for one moment. The MicroProse team confirm that there is indeed a dragon called Ralph in F14: Fleet Defender. *It seems that the development team at MicroProse are quite fond of putting visual jokes in their simulations. In* 1942: Pacific Air War *you should look out for a famous mythical island. There's a free piece of software in it for the first reader to write and tell us what the island is.*

SVGA Blues (...reds and greens)

I AM WRITING to you concerning *Sim City 2000*. I have a Super-VGA monitor, but my graphics card is only a Paradise VGA 1024X768 with 512K of memory. *Sim City 2000* needs a Super-VGA graphics card. I have neither *Sim City* the original nor *Sim City 2000*, so is *Sim City 2000* a major improvement over the original or is there no significant difference?

Keep up the good work Duncan (Mr Cursor).

Daragh Lave, Clareview, Limerick, Eire

If your Paradise card is capable of producing a display of 1024x768 in 256 colours then it is a SVGA card. However, since the card only has 512K of memory, it won't currently support the top resolution of 1024x768. Nevertheless, it will support the resolution that Sim City 2000 works at.

Yes, I can safely say that you will find Sim City 2000 a noticeably better game than the original Sim City, and you can also rest assured that the enhancements do go beyond the 3D graphics. ZZ

How to write to PC Zone

If you've got something to say about *PC Zone*, PC games or just PCs in general, we'd love to hear from you. Now you can send us mail in four different ways.

1. **You can write to us at *WordProcessor, PC Zone*, 19 Bolsover Street, London, W1P 7HJ.**
2. **You can send us a fax, marked for the attention of *WordProcessor*, on 071-436 1321.**
3. **You can e-mail us at Compuserve. Mark your message *WordProcessor* and send it to *PC Zone* 100142,2152.**
4. **You can send us e-mail via the Internet. Again, mark your message *WordProcessor* and send it to SOP6@ExNet.Com**

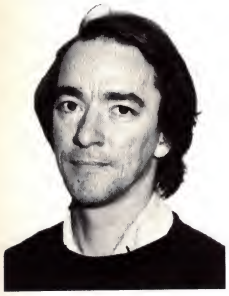
If you don't intend your letter to be published, please mark it clearly NOT FOR PUBLICATION. Unfortunately, we cannot reply individually to your letters, but we are always anxious to hear your comments on the magazine even if you do not intend them for publication.

NB *We reserve the right to edit your letters for length, so please be as concise as possible.*

The senders of all the letters published will receive either a free budget game or a free compendium of *PC Zone* recommended shareware. The sender of the letter of the month will receive a free full-price game. Unfortunately, we cannot send specific games, but if you state whether you would prefer to receive a disk or CD-based game, we will endeavour to comply subject to availability.

Bits & PCs

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO: *BITS & PCs, PC ZONE*, 19 BOLSOVER ST. LONDON W1P 7HJ



Pick a card, get set for *Doom*, fit a CD-ROM and disable your shadow ROM. Mark Burgess deals with all of your hardware problems and goes into what makes your PC tick.

Two-Hand Drive

PLEASE CAN you help me set up my computer.

I have a 486 DX2 66 with 8MB RAM and two hard disks. When I switch on, the computer boots up to DOSSHELL on drive C:. I am using drive C: for business use and *Windows* and drive D: for games.

Is it possible to have the computer boot up to a screen where I can select which drive to use without it loading DOSSHELL, and more importantly can I have a different AUTOEXEC.BAT and CONFIG.SYS for each drive (and do I need it).

Some software such as shareware will only install onto the C: drive. This I then transfer to the D: drive using the XCOPY commend. Is there an easier way please?

I have used the MS DOS 6 memory manager to set up the memory and find no problems with business packages including high end DTP and *Windows*.

It's the game software that causes problems, with *Fields of Glory* crashing when trying to move lots of things about. This did not happen before I had the computer upgraded from a 486 DX 33.

I have installed the Sound Blaster and DOS to both drives; is this needed or am I wasting space?

I would be most grateful if you could answer these questions. thank you so much for your help.

Ken Rankin, Westbury on Trym, Bristol

PS I've had to read the DOS manual many times since upgrading and it makes my head hurt.

Take one last go at the DOS manual. The section you want is the one that deals with setting up menus. In MS-DOS 6.0 and above, this is a painless operation. You want a normal CONFIG.SYS for your business programs that will have

```
DEVICE=C:\DOS\HIMEM.SYS
DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE RAM
BUFFERS=15,0
FILES=30
DOS=UMB
LASTDRIVE=E
FCBS=4,0
DEVICEHIGH=C:\DOS\SETVER.EXE
DOS=HIGH
COUNTRY=044,,C:\DOS\COUNTRY.SYS
DEVICEHIGH=C:\DOS\DISPLAY.SYS CON=(EGA,,1)
DEVICEHIGH /L:1,4560 =C:\WINDOWS\IFSHLP.SYS
STACKS=9,256
```

and other things that Windows and business programs need. The other CONFIG.SYS entry should be pruned down with only HIMEM.SYS, EMM386 and your sound card and mouse drivers. Just put a line at the end of the games menu item that directs the computer to the D: drive. (The reason for keeping AUTOEXEC.BAT and CONFIG.SYS files in C: is that the C: drive contains the active DOS partition.)

If shareware games insist on installing to C: simply move them over to D: by clicking and dragging under Windows File Manager.

Once your menu system is set up, you can have different entries to take into account the individual memory requirements of each game. If you don't use sound under Windows then by all means restrict your Sound Blaster driver to the games menu. Nothing would be lost by making it an item common to both drives.

Omitting DOSSHELL is easy: there'll be an entry in the AUTOEXEC.BAT reading C:\DOS\DOSSHELL. Delete it. **MB**

Kilo Files

I have an AMBRA Hurdla 486. Installed on the machine are MS-DOS 5.0 and *Windows 3.1*. This all seem to work fine, except for one small point; no matter what I do I don't seem to be able to get a correct reading for the directory size on the right-hand side of the status bar whilst in File Manager.

For instance, when the correct amount is 62,592, it reads 62 bytes. What is causing this? Have you come across this problem before and can I fix it or am I missing something that is blindingly obvious?

As a general comment; it seems to me that a large proportion of your technical advice seems to be dished out to overcome Conventional/Extended/Expanded memory problems. Why can't the manufacturers do away with the old 640k limitation? Than they can start designing decent processors without having to worry about memory managers, and use a plug in processor to run the old-fashioned programs. Or am I being simplistic and naive?

I am a subscriber to your most excellent journal. Congratulations on striking a balance with your content.

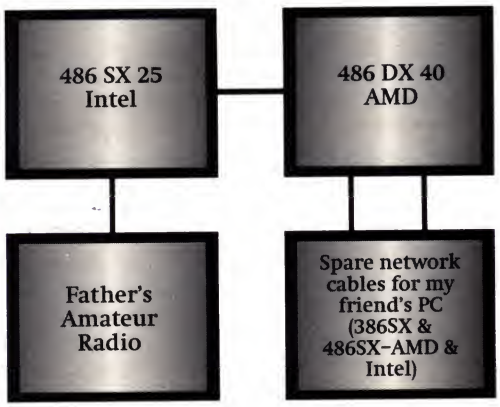
John Bertram, Caton, Lancaster

I think you are missing something: the letter "k". File Manager rounds up the size of director to kilobytes (1024 bytes), so the listing is correct. The problem with the 640K limit is not the processor. All Intel's processors from the 80286 onwards have been capable of directly addressing memory beyond 1Mb. The real villain of the piece is DOS, which is designed to work in real mode (in which only 1Mb can be directly addressed). Over the next couple of years operating systems like Chicago, which overcomes this problem, will begin to displace DOS, so your prayer is being answered, albeit slowly. **MB**

Networking

I AM writing to you as you are the best computer mag for the PC ever to appear, and seeing as you linked up lots of PCs at the Computer Shopper Show, I believe that you can help me.

I have (at the moment) a 496SX 25, 166 MB hard drive, 4 MB RAM, 1 MB SVGA Trident card, Sound Blaster 16 ASP, and, hopefully, in addition to this I am getting a 486DX 40, 525MB hard disk, 8MB RAM. 1MB Diamond Stealth 32, Sound Blaster 16 ASP/SCSI 2 connected to a NEC 3XI CD-ROM drive. What I want to do is to connect the PCs up as shown below:



I have no network knowledge at all and I do not know what network cards, cables or software to buy. My needs are playing seriously good games like *Indycar*, *Doom*, *Syndicate* etc. at a good speed, unlike playing null-linked *Doom* on a 386SX and 486SX (very slow and jerky). I also want to send messages, e-mail etc., and, unlike MS Interlink, to be able to access both stations at the same time. Also, is it possible to play games like *Dogfight* (modem support) over a network link? If so, how?

Please could you also give me the address of Thrustmaster so that I can purchase some good flight sim gear?

Thank you very much for your help and I hope to be able to link up soon.

Robert Morris, Dover

If you want to connect more than two you will need an ethernet card. These are cheap networking cards. Depending on what sort you get, the software might be bundled with it. In any case you will need plugs and cables to make the whole thing work. Doom uses the IPX protocol. As network software you could use Windows for Workgroups, Lantastic or – seeing as you obviously have a lot of money – Novell's Personal Netware (£44). Doom uses the cards at such a low level that it does not need the network services (only needs the IPX drivers).You won't have to put by a computer as a server, just put an ethernet

card in the back of each PC, connect them with T plugs and the cables and set up the network according to the software instructions. It won't be brilliant, but it will work. You might have a few problems at the beginning – networks are notoriously flakey. You may have noticed that the one at the Shopper Show crashed at least once an hour – and there the PCs were practically touching each other. The longer the cables, the dodgier the network. That's a law. (And speaking of laws, remember that registered Doom *is a one site license. If you want to play it on more than one machine then each PC must have its own registered copy.)*

A remote terminal is a remote terminal whether on a network or connected via a modem. Set up – baud rate and so on – is the same. The only thing to check on modem options is if they support only one other computer. **MB**

Learner driver

PC ZONE is always something high on my "must buy" list because it contains so much info on stuff that is out at the moment, and keeps me well informed about what is going on. It's got a sort of aura that puts it head and shoulders above the rest.

This sort of leads me to my first question. I have been on the lookout for CD-ROM drives at the moment and am hoping to get a triple speed model. I have several questions:

a) If you buy an internal CD-ROM drive, does it come with separate expansion cards which you put into your computer, or do you have to have a sound card with a CD-ROM interface?

b) Is it worth shelling out for a quad speed drive? How well and how much faster do they run as opposed to your ordinary single/double speed drive? Quad speed drives look as if they will last for some time to come and I want to get something future proof – for at least the next 3 to 4 years.

c) If you have a fast CD-ROM drive (e.g. triple speed) do you need a minimum requirement for your actual machine or does only the tech spec of the CD-ROM drive matter? For instance, do you have to have a 486 if you want to get a quad speed drive?

Finally, I have a question to ask on upgrading. I have a 486DX 33MHZ, distributed by Wren Technology. Is it possible for me to upgrade it, for example, to something as powerful as a 486DX-2 100MHZ or even a Pentium running at 90MHZ?

I would be grateful if you could enlighten me and inform a poor ignorant soul of the intricacies of the PC and related stuff.

Incidentally, could you name a place where I could get a CD-ROM drive (like the NEC ones) for reasonable prices?

Mark Choi, London

a) Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't. Check before signing that credit card slip.

b) I would say no. They're great fun but how much software supports them? Are CDs really designed to spin at 600 rpm? At the risk of pointing out the obvious, a double spin is twice as fast, a triple spin is three times as fast and a quad spin four, times as fast as a single spin. Few things in the computer world are future proof and 3 to 4 years is a long time. How many CD-ROMS were about 3 to 4 years ago? A double spin is Okay for at least a year or two. In any case, double speed is the fastest standard.

c) No. Even the fastest CD-ROM drive is still slower than a hard disk. Processing power is pretty much irrelevant. The only thing a CD has is massive storage capacity. Anything else can be done better by some other device.

What you need is a clock doubler. There should be a big, obvious socket next to the processor on the motherboard. However, a faster chip is often slightly cheaper. It should be easy on most 486s to change the chip. I don't know what model you have so check the manual for a section on upgrades and cost the thing out carefully.

Many PCs are described as "Pentium ready", but this is wishful thinking. The specifications for Pentium boards is still being changed by Intel. You won't be able to upgrade your 486 to a Pentium unless you're very lucky. On the other hand, you probably don't need a Pentium unless you're running a full-size weather forecasting program.

The best way to find out where to get a cheap NEC drive is by checking out the adverts in a magazine such as Computer Shopper. **MB**

Think of heading

I'VE GOT A 486SX 25, 4MB RAM, 120MB hard drive, SVGA, 3.5" drive, *Windows 3.1* and MS-DOS 6.2. I've just bought *Syndicate* and my problem is that my mouse won't work in parts of the game, e.g. at the beginning when you're configuring the agents the mouse works fine, but when the scene moves to the city the mouse pointer just sits at the bottom of the screen moving intermittently as I move my mouse around. I've been in touch with Electronic Arts and they've recommended various things like boot disks etc., but nothing seems to work. Please help.

Also, could you tell me which would be the best (cheapest) way to upgrade my 486SX 25 chip to a 486DX2. Is it just a case of unplugging the SX25 chip and plugging a DX2 in? Or is it more complicated than that?

G Zarravino, Hyde, Cheshire

Whenever you get erratic mouse behaviour in a game, it's usually one of two things. First is that the game really is bugged and needs a patch for full mouse operation. Second, and more common, is that the game requires Microsoft mouse driver. It's either in your DOS directory and called MOUSE.COM or it's in the C:\MOUSE directory and called MOUSE.EXE. Typing "mouse" in the directory will bring up a message saying that Microsoft Mouse Driver v (or whatever) is installed. Try one of the boot disks that EA has recommended and put the line c:\dos\mouse.com or c:\mouse\mouse.exe in the AUTOEXEC.BAT.

To get more speed from your computer, the first thing to look at is upgrading your memory to 8Mb. It will make an impressive difference. 120Mb isn't much for a hard drive these days and new ones are very cheap at the moment. Try the obvious, easy to do things before you shell out for a processor. If your PC has a universal motherboard, its easy to upgrade to a 486 DX2 66. The processor is the biggest chip on the board. It will be in a brightly coloured socket with a lever to one side. Lift up the lever, ease out the old chip, drop in the new and put the lever down. That's all there is to it. Do read your manual first, and take precautions about static. And make sure it goes in the right way round. **MB**

What is it with... Clock Speed

The bit of *Bits & PCs* that covers everything you wanted to know but never got round to asking

There are two clocks in your PC. The first and least useful is the "hardware" clock. This is a bit of circuitry that generates a signal – through interrupt 1A hex, if you need to know – 18.2 times a second. It is set by the DOS TIME command or by the internal, battery-powered, real-time clock.

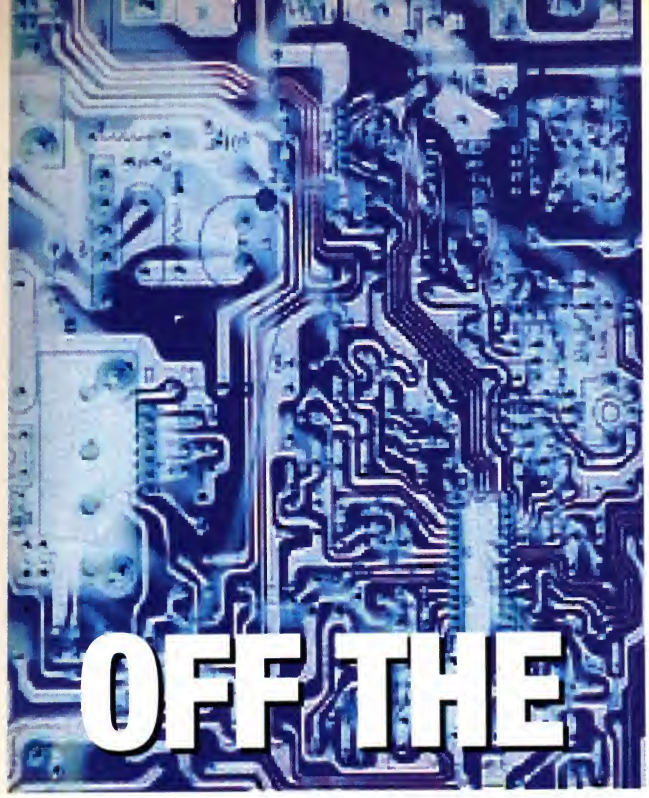
The clock we are interested in this month is the one that regulates the processor. The one that is behind all this talk about clock doubling. The one that adds meaning to 66 MHz. It is a little quartz oscillator which sends out a square wave millions of times every second. It's like the conductor of an orchestra. The processor takes the "beat" from this signal. Every time it receives a pulse, the processor moves to the next instruction in its stack. Almost. Some instructions take more than one clock cycle, depending on the processor. A simple multiplication could take 120 clock cycles for an 8088, but 20 cycles for a 80286.

The increase in the speed of processing has come about through better design and more transistors ("more trannies on the block"). The 8088 has about 29,000 transistors and the 80286 has 134,000. Clock-doubled chips, like the DX2, and clock-tripled ones, like the DX4, process instructions faster while still running at the same external speed.

You may have read about people putting a faster clock in their machine. This isn't as crazy as it sounds. The first ATs had a 286 running at 6 MHz. Later models ran at 8 MHz. But it was the same chip. The Americans used this trick with the old XTs. They would take out the master clock crystal and substitute faster and faster models until the computer gave out. Then they would go back one crystal speed to the last one that worked. This annoyed IBM no end and might be the reason why many clocks are soldered or glued in.

Unless you know exactly what you are doing, changing the clock is madness: it will always invalidate your guarantee and may destroy your processor or motherboard – about the most expensive mistake you can make. Furthermore, the gains are relatively modest; typically getting a 486 DX 33 to run at 40 MHz. This compares badly with using a DX4 chip to get 100 MHz out of a 33 MHz motherboard. The usual problems with replacing the clock are the chip overheating and bus clashes. A fan – if there is room – will fix the first problem. Many buses are designed to run at a specific speed and don't like running any faster. However, a few are equipped with jumpers that will let you run them at different speeds. Other cards – video and memory boards – may have to be changed as well. You might also have to add a wait state or two to the default wait state setting in the CMOS set-up. 50 MHz seems to be top whack for a 33 MHz chip. I've seen higher speeds claimed but never substantiated.

Apparently 486 - 66 chips after April '93 came with a phase locked loop that makes the chip crash (without damage) if an attempt is made to run it above 70 MHz. Spoilsports. Until the 486 came along it was usual for processors to use a clock that ran at twice the speed of the processor. An 80386 25 MHz would have a clock of 50 MHz but would simply ignore every second beat. 486 -based computers are the first to use a matching clock.



OFF THE BOARDS

Watch a comet plough into Jupiter, a snake eat apples and the eccentric orbit of Pluto. Pilot a submarine, lose at the horses and destroy asteroids (again). It's all in the wonderful world of shareware. Mark Burgess explains.

THE RECENT hammering of Jupiter by comet Shoemaker-Levy 9, showed again what a visually stunning science astronomy is. Within minutes the Astronomy forum on CompuServe had all the good images from earthbound observatories as well as from the Hubble Space Telescope. Along with some striking gif files were a number of excellent animations. Many were in the MPEG format: this requires a special player and, naturally, there is a shareware program that will play them for you. MPEGPlay is from Michael Simmons and runs under *Windows*. It needs a powerful machine, though. If you're stuck with just *Windows Media Player* (or the shareware program, *Runtime*) take heart – there are some very good animations available in *.AVI format. IMPACT.AVI shows fragments of the comet hurtling towards and then past you, crashing into Jupiter. Massive explosions light up the surface of the moon, Io.

WHAT DO YOU GET?

The disk should contain a file called READ.ME or README.1ST. Read it by typing TYPE README.1ST | MORE. There will also be some sort of batch (.BAT) file. Typing in the name of it should load the program.

Most programs will come in archived form. This is because the library is trying to fit as much information as possible on a 720k disk. The files will have extensions like .ARC, .ARJ, .LHA, .PAK, or .ZIP, but the disk will come with a program that will decompress the files, together with instructions on how to use it.

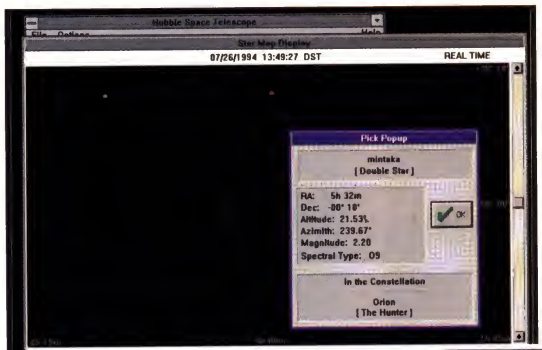
SKYMAP

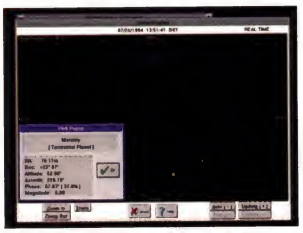
SKYMAP (reviewed issue 13) has been thoroughly revamped for release 2.1. The new version comes complete with an image viewer – *SkyView*. You can place your own favourite images within the program so that when you click on an object, you can call up a picture of it as well as its name, position and all other details. *SkyMap* has become the best shareware planetarium program and it's all written by Chris Marriott, who lives in Cheshire. Registration gets you more stars, and for a paltry extra £10 you can get the complete SAO database of stars, or over 50 astronomical gifs to use in the program.

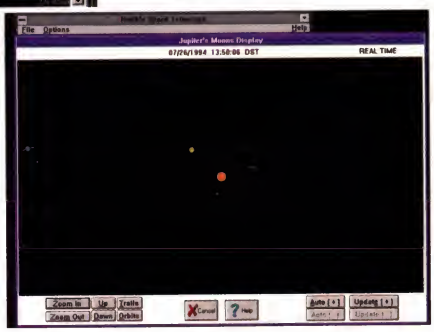
Shareware from: Chris Marriott
Registration: £15
Needs: Windows 3.1
Filename: skymapA.ZIP (632090)
skymapB.ZIP (644323)

(Top) Sky image and a view of the galaxy.
(Middle) The beautiful Venus.
(Bottom) Jupiter and Shoemaker-Levy 9.

HUBBLE







Hubble gives you the universe and full orbit animations.

HUBBLE SPACE TELESCOPE is a new program that shows astronomical simulations. It's not really a sky-viewing program, but it will show the past, present and future skies as viewed from anywhere on Earth, as well as the positions (with real-time updating) of the planets and comets as they orbit our Sun. It can also calculate specific data about celestial bodies and present this data in numeric form.

Program options allow you to select the date/time to view, the direction of view, your latitude and longitude on Earth, and much more. *Hubble* can display a complete day's movement of the heavens, demonstrate the retrograde motion of the planets, or one of many other astronomical simulations.

The shareware version is quite badly crippled with observations only allowed between January 1990 and July 1994 (so by the time you read this it won't be a lot of good).

Shareware from: Sci-Vision
Registration: $24.50
Needs: Windows 3.0 or better, EGA or better
Supports: Maths co-processor
Filename: hubble.exe (44680),

PLANETWATCH

PLANETWATCH is a fully-working program that combines animated maps, colour photographs and planetary information in an easy-to-use desktop atlas and Solar System simulation. The inner and outer planet orbits are displayed, and clicking on a planet will bring up a gif image and full information. The orbits can be set in motion and daily ephemeras sent to screen or printer.
Registration brings you the latest version, a larger 256-colour set of photo images, an enhanced atlas as well as a "mini-manual".

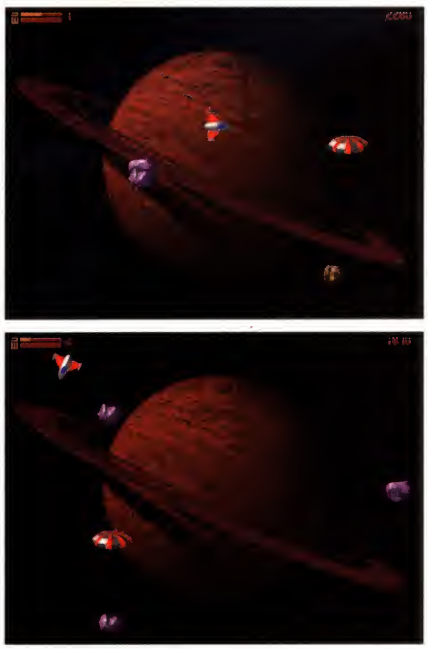
Shareware from: Galen Raben, Raben Software and Graphics
Registration: $20
Needs: 286, running Windows 3.1, and at least VGA
Filename: plnwch.zip (525183)

Explore the solar system with PlanetWatch.

ASTROFIRE

I SUPPOSE *Off the Boards* should carry an "Asteroids clone of the month" column. Here's this month's effort, and it's one of the best. Written by Owen Thomas from Watford, *AstroFire* has 256-colour raytraced graphics and 75 levels of asteroids and alien ships. The game is even better looking than *Comet Busters* (issue 17). When you hit the asteroids they split and change colour. Some leave power-ups behind when they are destroyed. To collect them you need to dodge in between other rocks. One of the advantages with this version is that collisions aren't instantly fatal (they don't do you any *good*, mind). Saucers and other space ships – 18 different types in all – make this a good and challenging version of a classic game.

Shareware from: Owen Thomas ORT Software
Registration: $29.95 or £19.95
Needs: 286 or faster (386 or better recommended), VGA
Supports: Sound Blaster (NOT AdLib)
Filename: astrof.zip (342345)



Saucers, rocks and Saturn: in my opinion this is the best Asteroid clone to date.

WHAT IS PUBLIC DOMAIN AND SHAREWARE?

PUBLIC DOMAIN

This is software that's free. You can copy and distribute it as you like. The only conditions are that you do not pass the work off as your own, do not incorporate it in another program without due credit and, of course, that you do not charge money for something you have got for nothing.

SHAREWARE

This is software that asks for a registration fee, either after a specific time or "if found useful". The fee varies enormously and you are morally obliged to pay it or stop using the program although it is true that many programs ask you to send $5 to an address in Wichita. A leading shareware author recently estimated that about 90% of users don't register. Registration brings the latest version of the program, a place on the mailing list for updates and, often, a properly printed manual. Not to mention a warm glow of moral satisfaction.

OTHERS

Bannerware/Adware: These are programs where the author does not ask for any payment but reserves copyright. This means that you have a free license to use and copy the game.

DEMONSTRATIONS

Many commercial software houses will release a playable demo of their latest games so that you have some idea of what you're expected to pay £50 for. Not often found in libraries, they tend to live on the cover of magazines or on bulletin boards.

WHAT DO YOU GET?

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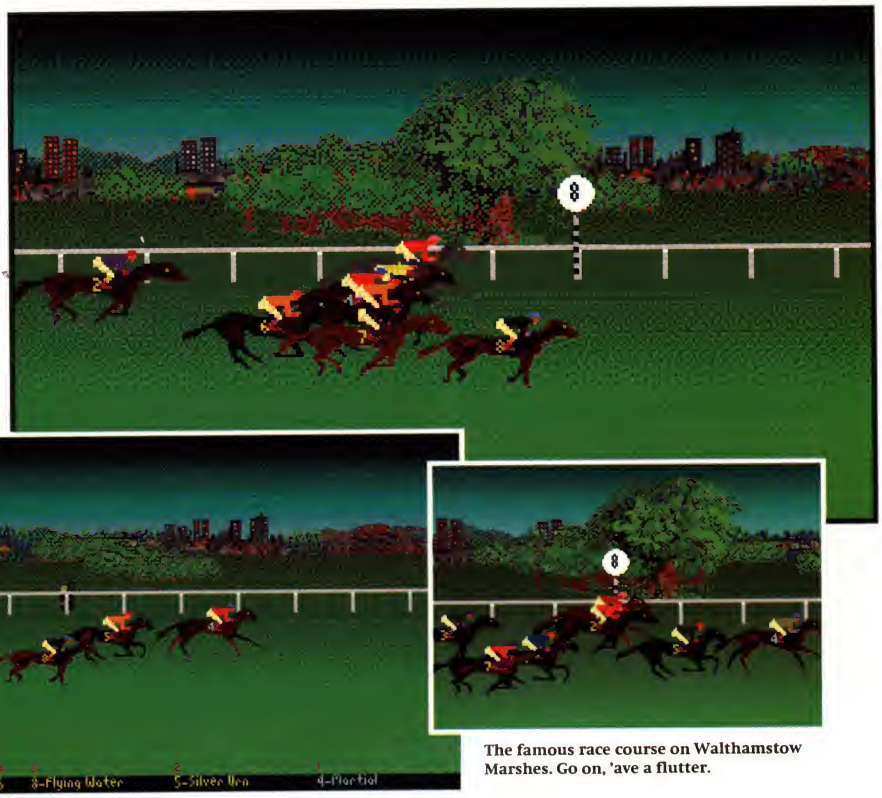
FIRM FAVOURITE

HERE WE are again in the flat season. Time to make the bookies quake in their boots. "Good Morning sir," they all shout to me as I stroll along the course at Goodwood. "Looks like Aspen again this year, doll," they say to their plump and happy wives. *Firm Favourite* is your chance to test your skill on the gee gees, generally have a nice time and win loads of money. Or maybe not. Just like the real thing.

You start off with a grand in your bin. Check out the ponies' form and if you see one you fancy, put down a monkey. Then it's coronary city as you watch your nag come poor fifth to the milkman's.

I enjoyed this game – it had a good deal of the excitement of the real thing. The horses race against scrolling 256-colour backgrounds, jockeying for position. The results are authentic too – I lost every time. Still, *Firm Favourite* is a painless substitute and long after the flat is over you can be honing your skills for next season. The only minor gripe I have is that you can't bet each way. No big deal, but for mug punters like me who always put a place bet on the second favourite, it detracts from the realism. The program is freeware, so there's no registration fee. New Era have two other horsy games – *Good to Firm* (£25) and *It's a Fair Bet* (£10).



The famous race course on Walthamstow Marshes. Go on, 'ave a flutter.

Freeware from: New Era Software PO Box 19
Livingstone EH27 8EH
Scotland 031 333 4958
Needs: 286 or better recommended, VGA
Filename: Phone New Era for details

MYSTIC TOWERS 3D

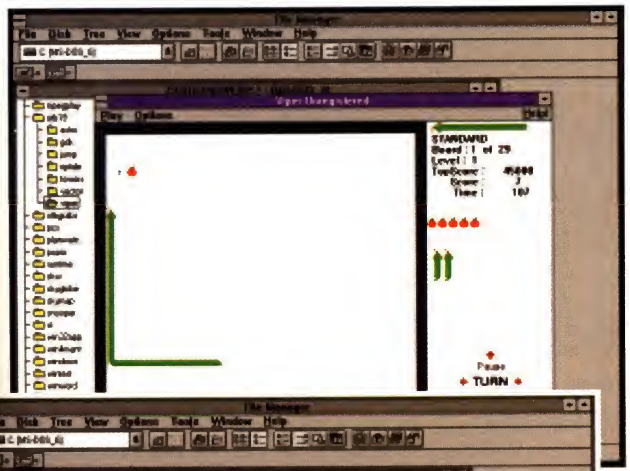
BARON BALDRIC was the star of a platform game last year. He moaned, he farted, he scratched his arse. Here was a cultural icon to rival Beavis and Butthead. Now he rides again in a new game from Apogee. The bad news is that Apogee have toned him down. So much so that he's unrecognisable. *Mystic Towers* is an isometric perspective game in which Baron Baldric agrees to help some villagers. This is wildly out of character. Worse still, he has been re-drawn and now has a kindly face, like Gabby Hayes. And only someone ignorant of American standards could ask whether he still suffers from flatulence and poor dress sense.

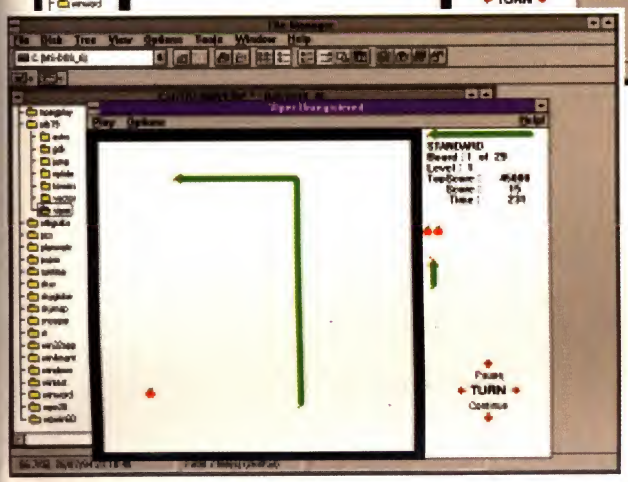
The game itself, however, isn't bad. You wander round a series of towers, collecting treasure and spells. The spells help you destroy the various demons and dragons which try and stop you. I find isometric games difficult to control and this one is no exception. Those of you who did technical drawing will find it a easy peasy. Graphics and sound are up to Apogee's normal high standards, but I wish they hadn't bought the Baron out of retirement for this.

The new clean and nice Baron Baldric now wanders about doing good. Ugh!

Shareware from: Animation Fx for Apogee.
Registration: $29.95
Needs: 286 or better and VGA
Supports: Joystick, Gravis gamepad and Sound Blaster
Filename: mystic.zip (1203933)

VIPER

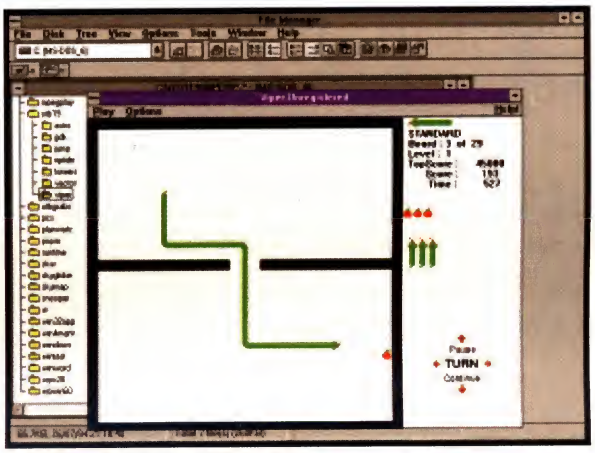




THIS IS an undemanding but fun *Windows* game from Double Oak Software. The idea is to direct the snake to an apple before the timer runs out. The more apples the snake eats, the longer it grows and the more ungainly to control. The snake dies if it runs over itself or into a wall. The boards start off without any barriers, but soon there are mazes to negotiate and survive. After all the apples are cleared from one board, you advance to the next. After the last board of the set, you advance to the next level and start afresh.

Controls are simple – just left and right mouse buttons (or cursor keys). The shareware version is crippled in three ways: you can't exceed the high score, you can't save games and you can't edit or create boards. Registration brings a full version of *Viper* together with full versions of *Patriot*, *Aliens* and *Reversal*.

Shareware from: Thomas Johnson for Double Oak Software
Registration:
Needs: Windows 3.1 or better
Filename: viper.exe



It's simple, but so is Kye. Voper will while away an idle hour.

RIPTIDE

THIS IS A superb arcade game where you are on a mission to find and destroy the sinister underwater laboratory of the evil Dr Tiberius Riptide. You pilot a yellow submarine which has a tiny submersible, called Jason, attached. Tactics are to shoot just about everything and watch the shield, fuel and air levels. In some missions you are able to surface to replenish your air supply. In others, it's a real race against time. You can send Jason away from your craft to explore those difficult passages too narrow for the main sub. And explore them you should because there is usually something vital, like a key or extra fuel or fire power, at the end of them. Excellent graphics, smooth scrolling and great sound effects and music. The game will adjust itself to the speed of your machine. Strongly recommended.

Shareware from: Pack Media Co.
Registration: $29
Needs: 386 or better and VGA
Supports: Joystick and Sound Blaster
Filename: riptid.zip (775960)

Thrills, spills and adventure in a yellow submarine.

GAME DEVELOPERS KIT

DON'T GET too excited. This won't help you crash out your own *Doom*. In effect, this is a none too good *Galaxies* clone with the ability to edit the sound and graphics. You can change the .WAV files, the ship design, the number per wave, vulnerability to hits and destructive power. You can configure the menu, the high score table and the "victory text". Basically, you can design any game, so long as it's a vertically scrolling shoot 'em up.

It's easy to use, but remember this is more of a game with lots of editing tools than a proper games designer. The registration fee (necessary to distribute any games you "make") is outrageous.

Shareware from: David Priemer
Registration: $65.00
Needs: 286 or faster (386 or better recommended), VGA
Supports: Sound Blaster (NOT AdLib)
Filename: gdk.zip (359102)

PC ZONE

BUYERS GUIDE

It's back!

Ever since the demise of the original Buyers Guide, your letters and phonecalls have been flooding in. So, we've finally relented and resurrected it. But this time we've decided to kill two birds with one stone. Another popular request is for an index of games reviewed. So here you have it: both in one guide. The Buyers Guide will be a rolling affair, and we'll be covering different issues every month. This month we've listed all the reviews from issues one to six. If you want to read the full reviews for any of the listed products, you can phone Dennis Direct on 0789 490215. If you want to order any of the games, on the other hand, please *don't* phone us, call the game's publisher direct.

Issue 1 – April 1993

The Complete Chess System
(80: Recommended) Kompart (UK) Ltd – Chess £34.99
Good enough for the expert, easy enough for the beginner.

Dune II
(89: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Strategy £35.99
Civilization meets Sim City in a frantic spice 'em up.

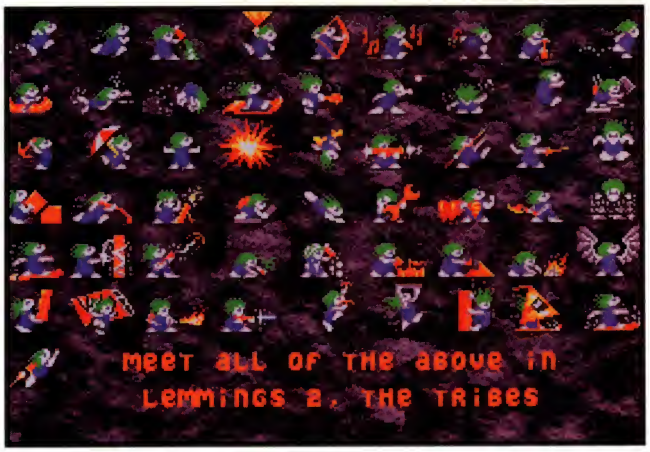
The Legend Of Myra
(65) Grandslam – Puzzle £14.99 – £10 direct
One of the best *Boulderdash* clones to appear recently. Hardly original, but fun for a while if you've got fast reflexes.

Lemmings 2: The Tribes
(88: Recommended) Psygnosis – Puzzle £39.99
A brilliant reworking of one of the best computer games ever written.

Ragnarok
(60) Mirage – Board Game £35.99
As the great man said: if you like this sort of thing, this is the sort of thing you like. Let down by too much energy spent on inessential, flashy bits and not enough on the main, interesting idea. As stand-alone shareware, the *King's Table* would rate 75%.

Reach For The Skies
(52) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Flight Sim £35.99
Uninspired ww2 flight sim with pretensions to strategy that don't stand up to close inspection.

Shadoworlds
(60) Krisalis – Role-Playing Game £34.99
We asked a hundred people who'd played *Shadoworlds* if they thought it was a damn good game with a smart control system. They said "Yes". Our survey said "Erk-err". Sorry, they lose.



(Above) The kamikaze fluff balls are at it again in Lemmings 2.

Stunt Island
(82: Recommended) Infogrames – Flight Sim £49.99
A unique simulation that combines all the fun elements of flight sims with superb 3D construction, film and editing utilities. A bit on the pricey side, but good value for film buffs nonetheless.

Tegel's Mercenaries
(50) Electronic Arts – Strategy – Deleted
Not funny. Not entertaining. And not very good either.

Transarctica
(55) Simarils – Strategy £14.99 (CD)
Reads a lot better than it plays. Very disappointing.

Ultima Underworld II: Labyrinth Of Worlds
(94: Classic) Origin – Role-playing Game £39.99
Just take our advice and go out now and buy it, okay.

Issue 2 – May 1993

Archer Maclean's Pool
(87: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Sport £14.99
Excellent Pool game. An impressive, if not wildly different, sequel to *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker*.

Battlechess 4000
(81:Recommended) Interplay – Chess £44.99
Brilliant, funny and with a workmanlike chess sim attached. But for how long will it stay funny?

(Below) Orcs and trolls await in the excellent Ultima Underworld II.

Blade Warrior
(40) Zeppelin Games – Combat £9.99 (£12.99 CD)
Arcade combat jaunt with a smattering of detailed quest elements.

Buzz Aldrin's Race into Space
(90: Classic) Interplay – Strategy £39.99
Testing strategy/historical simulation. Go out and buy it.

Crystals Of Arborea
(47) Simarils – Role-playing game £2.99
A badly designed RPG with only its price to recommend it.

Heroquest
(66) Gremlin Graphics – Board game £11.99
A good, but uninspired conversion of the classic board game.

Jordan In Flight
(70) Electronic Arts – Sport £39.99
Looks good, plays okay. There's just not enough to it, and it's a bit too easy.

Metal Mutants
(45) Simarils – Combat £2.99
Impress your friends – this disk makes an unusual coffee table coaster.

Ringworld
(80: Recommended) Tsunami – Adventure £39.99
An engaging interactive point 'n' click sci-fi romp.

Shadow Of The Comet
(87: Recommended) Infogrames – Adventure £44.99
A successful attempt to recreate the work of Lovecraft for game players. A must buy.

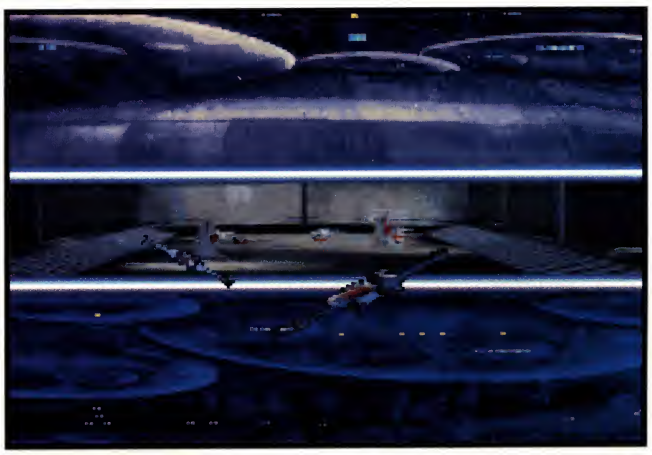
Space Quest V: Roger Wilco The Next Mutation
(72) Sierra On-Line – Adventure £39.99
Better than the usual twee nonsense from Sierra.

Spear Of Destiny
(60) Psygnosis – Shoot 'Em Up – Deleted
Outclassed, out of time and overpriced.

Storm Master
(70) Simarils – Strategy £2.99
An attractively presented and absorbing strategy game.

Veil of Darkness
(70) US Gold – Role-Playing Game – Deleted
Good script, easy to play but a little short.

Wacky Funsters
(30) Accolade – Compendium not available in UK
At only £19.99, I make it roughly one pound per second of entertainment value.



(Above) Top Star Wars action in LucasArts x-cellent X-Wing.

X-Wing
(88: Recommended) LucasArts – Space Combat £45.99
Fabbo space-based shoot 'em up.

Xenobots
(75) Electronic Arts – Combat £39.99
A spanking good strategic shoot 'em up which has too short a life expectancy for my liking.

Zool
(85: Recommended) Gremlin Graphics – Platform Game £29.99
The best platform game released for the PC so far.

Issue 3 – June 1993

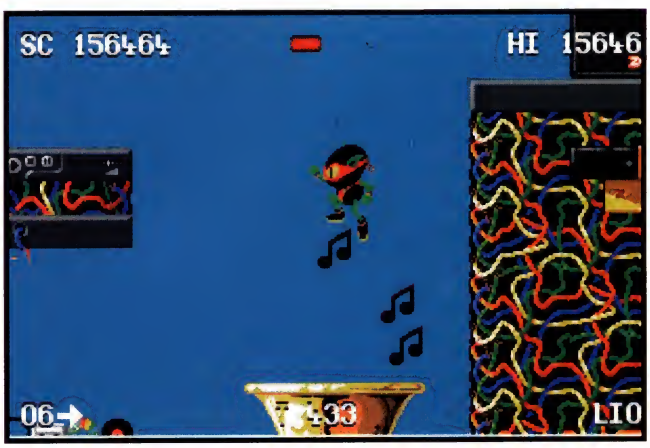
DJ Puff
(62) Codemasters – Platform Game £9.99
Okay, but looks like an 8-bit console game.

Dogfight
(50) MicroProse – Flight Sim £44.99
Far too easy, major flight model discrepancies and grass can kill you.

The Greatest
(70) Beau Jolly – Compilation £39.99
Contains: *Dune*, *Lure Of The Temptress* and *Shuttle*
A good way to save *£81.98* and try out some good, if slightly old, games.

International Athletics
(55) Zeppelin Games – Sport £9.99
Fun as far as it goes, which isn't far.

(Below) Ninja platform action from the nth dimension in Zool.



International Rugby Challenge
(67) Domark – Sport £29.99
Scores a try, but doesn't quite manage the conversion.

The Legacy
(60) MicroProse – Role-playing Game £44.99
A brave attempt to create a gothic role-playing game which doesn't quite gel.

Serpent Isle: Ultima VII Part Two
(89: Recommended) Origin – Role-Playing Game £44.99
Origin's flair for storytelling and atmosphere creating pays off again.

Spaceward Ho!
(25) New World Computing – Space Combat £44.99
There are better strategy games for free.

Strike Commander
(65) Origin – Flight Sim £49.99
There are lots of brilliant bits, but also an equal number of 'unbrilliant' bits.

The Terminator 2029
(50) Bethesda Softworks – Combat £29.99
Terminal Case.

Tony La Russa II
(73) SSI – Sport – Deleted
An exceptionally detailed baseball game, and almost a very good one.

Unlimited Adventures
(59) SSI – Role-playing Game – Deleted
Competent, but not a must-buy.

Wayne Gretzky Hockey 3
(69) Bethesda Softworks – Sport £44.99
May appeal to buffs, but has nothing to attract the casual browser.

World Cricket
(30) Zeppelin Games – Sport £9.99
Fails to provide either action or strategy.

Issue 4 – July 1993

Boston Bomb Club
(70) Simarils – Puzzle £9.99
Fairly basic but fairly addictive puzzler.

Cohort II
(30) Impressions – Strategy £34.99
All the fun of a barium meal.

Eye of the Beholder III: Legend Of Myth Drannor
(64) SSI – Role-playing Game £39.99
Lacks the feel of its prequels. Sadly, for the yellow-fingernailed brigade only.

(Left) Ultra violent mayhem in Bullfrog's excellent Syndicate.

(Right) Endless flipper fun with 21st Century's Pinball Dreams..

Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist
(85: Recommended) Sierra On-Line – Adventure £39.99
An utterly absorbing, entertaining and difficult point 'n' click adventure with some incredibly naff in-jokes.

Maelstrom
(70) Empire – Strategy £39.99
Complex space trading cum exploration jaunt.

Nippon Safes Inc.
(66) Global Software – Adventure £34.99
Great plot, nice artwork, decent price but nothing out of the ordinary.

Populous And The Promised Lands
(85: Recommended) Hit Squad – Strategy £14.99
One of the greatest games ever written – just buy it!

The 7th Guest
(60) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Adventure £44.99 (CD)
Technologically okay, but disappointingly weak on gameplay and way too expensive.

SimLife For Windows
(69) Maxis – Strategy £17.99
If you liked SimEarth... Fun, but not lasting fun.

Space Hulk
(90: Classic) Electronic Arts – Strategy £44.99
Death, destruction, blood, gore, tension, fear, and a damn good game as well.

Starblade
(22) Simarils – Space Combat/Trading £9.99
It crashes a lot, but why care?

Strike Fleet
(75) Hit Squad – Wargame £12.99
A worthwhile addition to your naval sim collection.

Super Ski II
(20) Microids – Sport £9.99
Sad speccy ski game.

Tom Landry Strategic Football
(75) Merit Software – Sport £29.99
A very good strategic American football sim that could do with a bit more player involvement.

V for Victory 3 – Market Garden
(82: Recommended) Three-Sixty Pacific – Wargame £44.99
Why bother with boards, hexes and counters when you've got games like this?

Where In Space Is Carmen Sandiego?
(85: Recommended) Electronic Arts – Edutainment £39.99
Educational, fun and highly recommended.

Issue 5 – August 1993

10 Intelligent Strategy Games
(60) Oxford Softworks – Compendium £34.99
Good sampler and good value.

688 Attack Sub
(78) Hit Squad – Submarine Simulation £14.99
Sub-standard? Definitely not!

Air Bucks v1.2
(49) Impressions – Strategy £34.99
A potentially interesting variation on a theme which fails largely due to being more than a tad unexciting.

Betrayal At Krondor
(91: Classic) Dynamix – Role-playing Game £39.99
The licence makes a lot of difference – great story, great game.

Championship Manager '93
(75) Domark – Sport £29.99
An undoubtedly 'serious' management game that's involving, but occasionally unnecessarily slow.

Chess Maniac 5 Billion & 1
(60) Spectrum Holobyte – Chess £44.99
Falls between two stools – and we're being very nice here.

The Cycles
(55) Hit Squad – Sport £12.99
An overpriced and underpowered ride into the past.

Dizzy Collection
(60) Codemasters – Compilation £29.99
Contains: *Fast Food Dizzy*, *Fantasy World Dizzy*, *Kwik Snak*, *Dizzy Prince Of The Yolkfolk*, *Magicland Dizzy*.
A poor egg-scuse to make totally unfunny egg yolks. Just about playable.

Ishar 2: Messengers Of Doom
(50) Simarils – Role-playing Game £14.99 (CD)
Would have been a real contender if it had been released a year or two earlier.

James Pond 2: Codename Robocod
(87: Recommended) Millennium – Platform Game £24.99 – Only available in a compilation
"Nifty scrolling, great gameplay," is your first remark on playing *Robocod*, closely followed by the plea "Has anyone got a pair of sunglasses?"

Premier Manager
(59) Gremlin Graphics – Sport £34.99
Not recommended as a full-priced game – it would make a good, fun budget game.

Prince Of Persia 2: The Shadow And The Flame
(89: Recommended) Brøderbund – Platform Game £39.99
We reckon they could have done more with it, but it's a corker nevertheless.

Protostar
(80: Recommended) Tsunami – Space Combat/Trading £44.99
A slick game that's full of nice touches and good ideas, but if you're not patient, don't even think about it.

Syndicate
(90: Classic) Electronic Arts – Strategy £44.99
Incredibly violent, completely amoral and brilliant fun.

War In The Gulf
(81: Recommended) Empire – Wargame £34.99
A great set of blood-thirsty missions for one of the most playable 3D battle sims ever.

Worlds Of Legend
(73) Mindscape – Role-playing Game £29.99
Perfectly reasonable but rather old-fashioned fantasy RPG jobbie.

WWF Wrestlemania
(58) Hit Squad – Sport £9.99
Fairly limited beat 'em up, which was delivered much better on the console.

Issue 6 – September 1993

Blade Of Destiny: Realms Of Arkania 1
(78) US Gold – Role-playing Game £39.99
Large in scale, absorbing to play – but more suited to 'serious' role-players than your average gamer.

Blue Force
(35) Tsunami – Adventure £39.99
Tiresome controls and sloppy design mar what could have been a decidely average adventure.

Caesar's Palace For Windows
(65) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Casino Compendium £39.99
A good compilation; unnervingly addictive.

Fields Of Glory
(89: Recommended) MicroProse – Wargame £44.99
A brilliant simulation that puts even the most reluctant wargamer right into the thick of it. Only its speed prevents it from being awarded Classic status.

Flashback
(89: Recommended) US Gold – Platform Game £37.99
It's *Prince Of Persia* in the future (but this time he's got a gun).

The Immortal
(70) Hit Squad – Role-Playing Game £12.99
Oooh, at least four Sunday afternoons' play we reckon.

Lotus – The Ultimate Challenge
(68) Gremlin Graphics – Driving Game £29.99
Nothing particularly new, but good fun, especially in two-player mode.

Maniac Mansion 2: Day Of The Tentacle
(85: Recommended) LucasArts – Adventure £42.99
Lovely graphics, good music, quite challenging but a bit too American for our roast beef and dumplings taste buds.

MIG-29: Fulcrum
(70) Domark – Flight Sim £14.99
Almost no scenery, but a nice flight model.

Monopoly
(75) Supervision – Board Game £34.99
A faithful conversion, which is slightly too flashy for its own good.

(Above) Ultra speccy flying with Digital Integration's Tornado.

Napoleonics
(79) On-Line Entertainment – Wargame Compendium – Deleted
Contains: *Austerlitz*, *Borodino*, and *Waterloo*
Three excellent and original Napoleonic wargames for tactical experts.

Open Golf
(50) Ocean – Sport – Deleted
A disappointing foray into the world of golf sims from Ocean.

Pinball Dreams
(78) 21st Century Entertainment – Pinball Simulation £37.99
As enjoyable as the real thing, but a bit on the pricey side.

Prehistorik 2
(50) Titus – Platform Game £7.99
A very average platform game, which competes with some budget titles but sadly with little else.

Rags To Riches
(60) Interplay – Strategy £39.99
Lacks excitement; unlikely to have a long drive life.

Return Of The Phantom
(73) MicroProse – Adventure £44.99
Delightfully atmospheric and aimed at beginners rather than hardened adventure buffs. Even so, it is still a tad too short to justify the price.

Sensible Soccer
(70) Renegade – Sport £30.99
The best football game around for the PC, but still not as good as it should've been.

Space Legends
(75) Empire – Compilation £34.99
Contains: *Megatraveller 1*, *Elite Plus*, *Wing Commander*.
You'll like at least two out of three.

Tornado
(93: Classic) Digital Integration – Flight Sim £44.99
The more you play, the deeper it gets – eventually you'll need a bathyscape. Not recommended for beginners.

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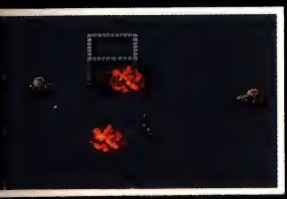

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Mr Cursor

HE'S AFRAID OF PLASTIC SURGERY

I've got this theory, and I want to try it out on you. Ready? Go! Okay, so we all know what Michael's done to his face, and most people seem to reckon it's got something to do with him wanting to look like Peter Pan. A perfectly reasonable theory, sure, but I don't buy it anymore – not after seeing the latest pictures of his somewhat unpleasant sister, Latoya, who looks like she's had more stuff done to her face than Michael himself. Here's how my theory goes, in dialogue form:

Michael's first visit to his plastic surgeon, many years ago...

Michael: I'd like you to make me look like my sister, Latoya. Here's a photograph of her. Do you think it's possible?

Plastic Surgeon: Yes, but it'll take a few operations.

Michael: That's okay by me. And money is no object, because I've got a zillion dollars. Here's a large wad for starters.

Latoya's first visit to her plastic surgeon, many years ago...

Latoya: I suspect my brother Michael is having his face altered so he'll look like me. Here are a couple of recent photos. So what's your verdict?

Plastic Surgeon: Hmmm. Yes, I'd say your suspicions were correct.

Latoya: Well, I want you to alter me so that he never... catches up.

Plastic Surgeon: Er... so what do you want done exactly?

Latoya: I don't know... um, make me look like an alien.

Michael's 50th visit to his plastic surgeon, a few years later...

Michael: Do I look like Latoya yet?

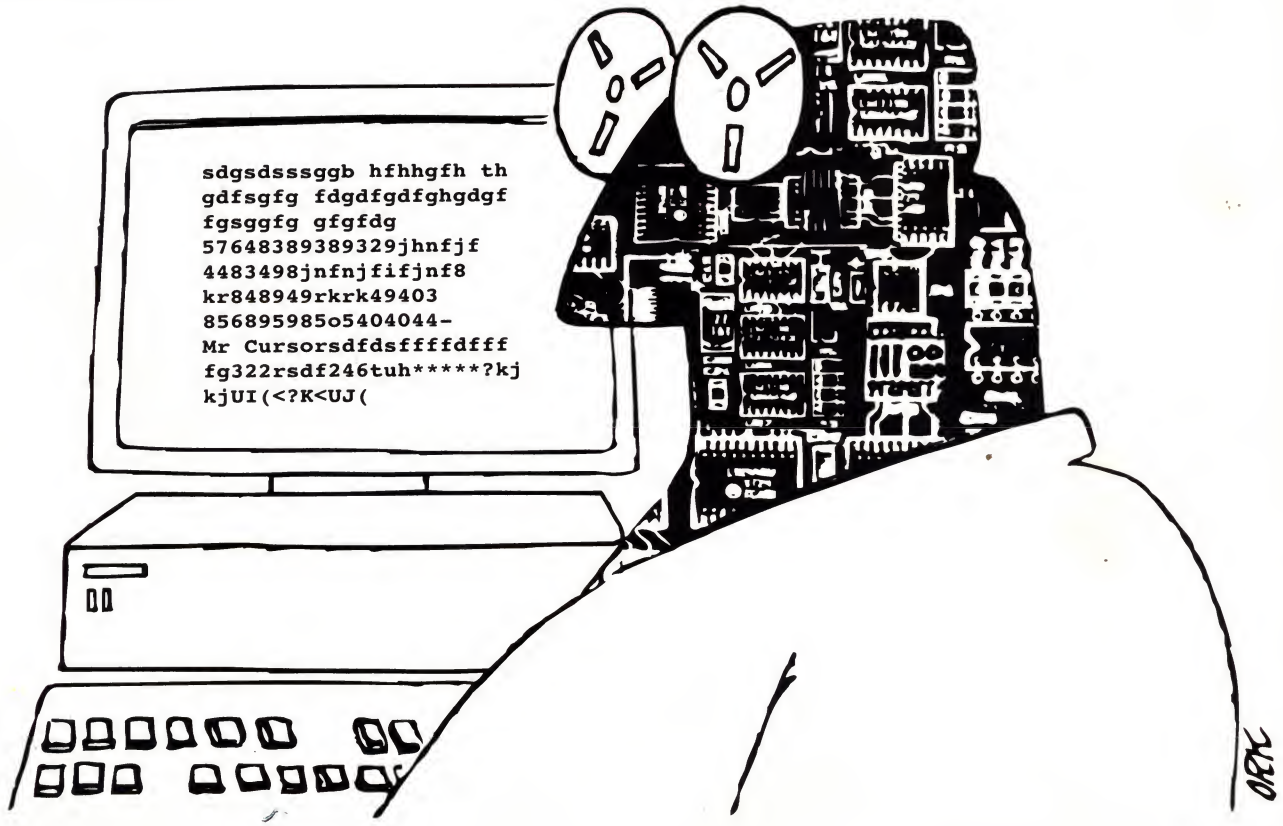
Plastic Surgeon: Not quite, I'm afraid. Her surgeon is doing stuff I would never have expected, and he's changing tack continually. It looks as if they're onto us.

Michael: Then double guess them. I'll triple your fee every time you get something right and, what's more, if you screw up occasionally, I'll let it go.

And so on...

Get the idea? My theory, at the end of the day, is that the Jackson siblings are engaged in a plastic face-race into the ninth dimension... which brings me onto the next of this month's subject matters – namely, a feasible game concept. (Yes, I've finally got back to computers.)

So what do you reckon about this: a plastic surgeon sim? Fair enough, so there was *Life And Death* (a diagnosis and simple operation simulation) and its sequel (a brain surgery simulation), but they both suffered from being crap. However, imagine a simulation where you listen to what the punter wants done to his or her face (or body), discuss it with them somewhat, are able to morph things around on your drawing-board until you get the patient's okay, and then have to actually carry out the operation itself in nightmarishly graphic and sonic detail, with the sounds of snapping bones, popping eyeballs and everything. It might sound limited in the gameplay department, but it's not... I've got a whole storyboard worked out and everything: you start off doing nose jobs on "ordinary folk" in Croydon and if you do well enough you eventually end up zapping across the ocean in Concorde and working on mega-stars in Hollywood – ultimately buying a mansion in Beverley Hills, next door to Aaron Spelling or someone. Liz Taylor comes round for tea and stuff. Your best friend is Clint Eastwood! And on and on. ZZ



(Below) Developing an all-new saline implants program is no easy feat.

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